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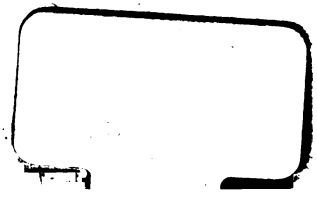

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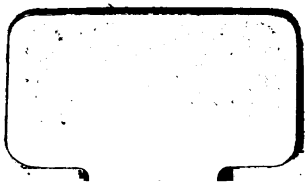

THE

PEASANT

OF

ARDENNE FOREST:

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By Mrs. PARSONS,

AUTHOR OF

ANECDOTES OF TWO WELL-KNOWN FAMILIES
THE MISER, THE VALLEY OF ST. GOTHARD,
AN OLD FRIEND WITH A NEW FACE,
WOMAN AS SHE SHOULD BE,
MYSTERIOUS WARNING, &c.

"Hereditary honour in worldly estimation is accounted the most noble; but reason and sound judgment speaketh in favour of him who hath acquired distinction by his *merit*; for 'tis *virtue*, and not *birth*, which maketh men truly noble:—And poor is his boast, who is compelled to *borrow* his claims to respect from a long list of titled ancestors."

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THE

PEASANT

OF

ARDENNE FOREST.

CHAP. IX.

"I was born in England—my family name is Douglas. My father is descended from the younger branch of a noble family of that name, who have still remained attached to the catholic religion, and carefully retained all their prejudices, their pride, and the dignity of their ancestors. The paternal fortune of my grandfather was small, and as being a catholic he was

precluded from the usual resources of younger brothers, the church, the navy, or army; he vegetated in retirement, and contracted a severe misanthropy of disposition, which tinctured every action of his life with a sombre shade that equally repelled love and confidence.

"My grandmother could not boast of a long train of titled ancestors, but her family was respectable;—her father, a private gentleman, who not having the dignity of rank to support, from a moderate estate had been enabled to encrease it, and to leave her, his only child, near twenty thousand pounds. This gentleman being also a catholic, and residing in the neighbourhood of Lord Douglas, extremely respected and beloved, an interchange of formal visits and occasional civilities had passed between the families; and as much as a man of my grandfather's disposition could love, he was said to be attached to Miss Webbe.

"The

"The death of her father, when she was little more than seventeen, placed her in the guardianship of a mutual friend to both families; and her fortune being a very great convenience to a younger brother, my Lord Douglas, after some struggle with family pride, gave his consent, and the young folks were united, with a moderate share of love on both sides, but with dispositions entirely opposite.

"My grandmother was lively, good-tempered, and naturally humane and benevolent. The man she had given her hand to was proud, unsocial, and severe. The completion of the only wish he had formed, had an influence upon his disposition for a few months; but he gradually fell back into his old habits, and resumed all the unpleasant traits in his character, which had "grown with his growth," and were too firmly rooted for any circumstances or endeavours of his wife to eradicate.

" The disappointment of her hopes, and the retired life she was compelled to appear contented with, had its natural effect upon a lively and very young woman.

" Her good humour was happily constitutional; and though her spirits were depressed, the activity of her mind subdued, and her very virtues thrown into the back ground, from whence they were not permitted to shew themselves, she still retained a sweetness of temper, that made her the object of universal regard with those who knew her—and almost one of adoration to her children.

" But she grew habitually melancholy. A constant witness of her husband's severity, and cold regards towards his children, her mind weakened,—her affections all centered in those dear objects of maternal solicitude,—her tenderness and indulgence fell into the contrary extreme, and

and proved the source of bitter regret to herself, and of much misery to those more dear to her than life.

"Excuse me, dear madam," said Fidelia, "for being so prolix—it was necessary to display the disposition of my grand parents, to account for the unhappy consequences of an ill-judged indulgence, in its effects upon the mind of my father, who was the youngest of three sons, the fruits of this ill starred union I have been speaking of.

"My grandfather undertook to be the preceptor of the two youngest, on whom he grudged the most trifling expence; whilst the eldest, who was destined to keep up the family consequence, and inherit almost the whole of his fortune, was sent to a private seminary, where only a very few of the first catholic families in the kingdom, could educate their children, from

the immense expence attending it,—and to do this, he abridged himself, his wife, and younger children, of almost common necessaries.

"These deprivations still more soured his temper, and my poor grandmother's only source of comfort arose from private indulgencies to her dear boys.

"Before the eldest of the two was thirteen, they took the small pox; it proved fatal to James the elder one, but the young Edward, who is my father, recovered.

"This event which agonized the heart of a mother, appeared to give very little emotion to the inflexible severity of a father's feelings;—but it caused the whole stock of tenderness which had been divided between two objects in my grandmother's bosom, to centre in one, and that one had his mind so enervated by her softness and indulgence,

indulgence, as to have a fatal effect upon the whole tenor of his conduct through life, and I fear will always embitter his existence to the last hour of its termination.

"When my grandfather died, which event was sudden, by an apoplectic fit, my uncle was abroad on his travels, and nearly two and twenty. He was immediately recalled, and soon obeyed the summons. To his mother, or brother just then nineteen, he shewed very little attention; he took possession of the estate, and all its accumulations.—Two hundred and fifty pounds was the widow's jointure, and fifteen hundred the brother's portion; which was immediately paid, with a civil intimation that he was at liberty to leave the house as soon as he pleased.

"He did not speak quite so plain to his mother, but he gave her no invitation to remain; and within three months after the

death of my grandfather, they left the mansion of maternal inheritance, and settled in a small village near London.

"My father, doatingly fond of his mother, for near a twelvemoth that she lived in it, never quitted the precincts of the village; while she was eternally anxious to form some plan for the advantage of her son.

"He had relatives of high rank in both kingdoms; to them she applied for advice and assistance. Alas! she knew but little of the great world, and how seldom great or affluent persons choose to acknowledge or bring forth an obscure relative, from whom they can derive neither pleasure nor consequence by the introduction.

"The answers she received were cold, and distantly polite. Assistance not one could afford, the little interest they had, was

was already engaged; and advice was generally unthankful and unprofitable.—If the young gentleman had talents, no doubt his brother's fortune and influence would more essentially serve him, than persons wholly unacquainted with his character or abilities.

"These repulses were so little expected, and pressing upon a tender anxious heart, long suffering under oppression, and only supported by the flattering hope of seeing a darling son prove an ornament to society, and the pride of her latter days, that the consequence was a deep dejection which preyed on her constitution, and threatened the most fatal effects.

"My father was agonized, the faculty advised her to remove to London, where she would have the first advice; and the busy scenes might possibly, by their novelty, attract and engage her regards, from

dwelling always on her disappointments and apprehensions,

"She acquiesced, after first making one fruitless application to her eldest son; whose answer was, that Edward possessed a very decent patrimony for a younger son, and that such a tender mother had doubtless taken care to provide against future contingencies—reverting to her death, and consequent loss of her jointure.

"This unfeeling letter determined her; and to preserve a life of such consequence to her Edward, she would have gone to any place or kingdom.

"In a short time after their arrival in London, her health appeared to get better from the efforts she made to struggle against the malady of her mind. She soon became acquainted with two or three genteel families, and my father also, had several companions

panions who were delighted to rub off the rusticity of his appearance, and explode his antediluvian notions of filial duty, and propriety of conduct,

"His mind, enervated by the indulgence of a too tender mother, his heart unadulterated by a commerce with mankind, and his education confined, and even neglected by an austere father — the world now opened before him by the information of his companions, and the new and enchanting scenes of pleasure, so intoxicating to youth, that daily swam before his eyes,— had very soon, all the pernicious effects his insidious informants desired.

"It becomes not me to repeat the unhappy irregularities of a father, but he very early fell into one dreadful error that stampt the complexion of his future days with eternal misery and regret.

"He

" He was introduced by a friend, (what a perversion of the name!) to a very lovely young woman, an orphan relative, who had a thousand captivating graces, besides a beautiful face; she was not more than sixteen, and said to be under the care of an aunt.

" My father was in a few hours an age gone in love; and the object of his admiration seemed pleased with his attentions. He visited the lady daily, they were much alone together, the aunt but seldom introduced. Mutual love was confessed, and my father resolved to announce to his mother, his intention to marry the beautiful Anna.

" His friend had told him she was without fortune, he never considered the smallness of his own; love alone was sufficient for *his* happiness, and with Anna it was impossible

impossible to feel any discomforts from a narrow income.

"During this tender intercourse his mother was forgotten, or only remembered when he returned at night, after passing his days with the object of his adoration. She began to feel his neglect very sensibly—she gently remonstrated, and enquired into his acquaintance and pursuits; but he had already been ridiculed on the folly of being held in leading-strings by his mamma, and warned against making her the confidante of his actions.—Thus shielded from her tenderness by the pernicious advice of those artful men who had gained an unlimited power over his mind, for the first time in his life, he studied to deceive and impose upon her such an account, as though it did not satisfy her, yet from her confidence in his integrity, she did not feel herself justified in disbelieving. She contented herself therefore with a few gentle

gentle cautions not to be led into improper company and expences.—But the good lady herself knew but little of the world,—of the dangers to which a weak unsophisticated heart was exposed,—and implicitly relied on her son's principles, and his constant affection for her.

"Not to dwell on this subject, I will hasten to more important matters. My father and the young lady being too much alone, very much in love, and sometimes forgetful of every thing but their mutual tenderness, unhappily one evening they forgot themselves, the respect due to her innocence, and those principles which ought to direct a man of honour in his conduct towards the object of his affection.

"Bitter repentance and self-reproach followed the transactions of this night. The young lady confessed that she had been betrayed by her feelings to counteract the

the plan in which she had been instructed, to draw him into a marriage, having been brought to town purposely by her aunt to be disposed of to the best bidder; and she had only been twice in public, before the friend of her aunt, and the assumed one of my father, had pointed out him as a weak young man, of tolerable fortune, good family, and great expectancies—in short, just such a man as might be easily drawn in to marry a beautiful girl, without any fastidious enquiries into fortune or connexions.

"This confession did not in the least abate my father's affection; but he no longer dared to hope for the consent of his mother, to an union with a young woman, whose family were more disgraceful by their conduct, than beneath him by obscurity of birth or want of fortune.—Whilst both were lamenting their imprudence, and undecided how to act upon the occasion,

occasion, the aunt surprised them; and was not long before she was let into the secret, which they had not art enough to conceal.

"Her passion exceeded all bounds, and she treated the unhappy girl so cruelly, that my father, in an agony, swore he would make her his wife; and obliged her, by his solemn vows to be observant of this promise, and his assurance of providing for her niece in future, to give over insulting the afflicted Anna, and attend to reason.

"The worthless woman was too cunning to depend on the oaths of a lover in a moment like that—she sent instantly for a bond, compelled him to draw it up, pledging himself to marry Anna Wheatly on the death of his mother, on the forfeiture of two thousand pounds. This was signed and witnessed before my father left the house, and without the smallest reluctance

luctance on his part; for he really felt an inclination, and duty enjoined him to make the poor girl all the reparation in his power.

"Had they demanded instant marriage he would not have hesitated, but the aunt was too cunning to insist upon it then; she had her own gratification in view—whilst Anna lived with her, he must and should support them. She knew it must now be repugnant to his heart to introduce a wife to his mother that must in every point of view be disgraceful to her son; and from her enquiries it appeared, that mother was fast declining, and could not in all probability live many months, during which time she would reap all the advantages she could from the rod she held over him. Such were the views this unworthy woman afterwards confessed. Mean time my father went home poignantly afflicted, though not repentant of his bond, which he

he viewed as an act of justice from a man of honour.

" It was a late hour, yet he found his mother up, waiting for him. She asked him no questions, but expressed considerable anxiety for his health, which she feared a too warm pursuit after pleasure, and such irregular hours would greatly impair. He was affected by her tenderness and forbearance, and promised he would be more at home.

" He visited Anna every day, passed most of his time with her, and gave the worthless aunt all the money he could possibly obtain. He was informed, that the kind introductor to his acquaintance with them was gone to France; he did not regret his absence. Every day he grew more and more devoted to Anna; and often deliberated whether he should not solicit his mother's approbation to marry her—

her—the aunt dissuaded him, and his own apprehensions of giving her pain by such an imprudent attachment, kept him silent for many weeks.

"One day his mother informed him, that an old friend of her father's had called upon her, a very respectable banker, to whom she had candidly opened her painful situation, and constant anxiety for the welfare of her son. "This good gentleman," continued she, "pointed out two ways of providing for you—either by purchasing a place with the money your father left you, or going into the army. To the latter I gave a decisive negative, your constitution is not equal to the exertions of a soldier's life. He then offered to take you into his own house, on terms most liberal and advantageous. Now, my son, what are your thoughts on these different propositions?—Speak freely, could

I but see you settled, the remnant of my life would be wound up in peace."

"My father desired two days for deliberation, in fact, he wished to consult Anna—and on the following day repeated to her this conversation; and then first, to the equal surprise of the aunt and niece, they were informed, fifteen hundred pounds was all he was entitled to expect, after the death of his mother. Both were disconcerted, but both were too cunning to let their disappointment be visible; and, as if informed by one mind, they decided for the banking-house.

"Having no opinion, no firmness of mind, to accept or reject any plan from deliberation himself, he was guided by their wishes; and in a few days after waited upon the banker, accompanied by his mother, who was equally pleased with his choice. It had been her wish, but she was

was fearful he had a little of the family mania, which might revolt against any situation connected with business. She knew not that all powerful love had weakened the fastidious pride of noble ancestry, and gave him much credit for the superiority of his understanding in a triumph over prejudice, when in fact she was solely indebted for his compliance to the weakness of his heart. So seldom can we appreciate the real motives that govern the actions of mankind, from ostensible appearances.

"This tender mother, who appeared to drag on life only till her wishes were accomplished for the welfare of her son, died within three months after he was settled in the banking-house, and in less than five months after his fatal engagement with Anna. The connexion he had formed, and his still extravagant fondness for her, lessened his regrets, and in a short time consoled him for the loss of a beloved parent;

rent; whose too tender affection, arising from the purest motives, to counteract the unjust partiality, and undeserved severity and neglect of a father, had unhappily weakened the body, and infused an unconquerable imbecility of mind in the object of her regards, which latterly had been a source of constant uneasiness to herself, and stampt the colour of his future life with unavailing repentance and eternal inquietude.

" At this period the darling Anna was far advanced in her pregnancy; but as the banker was his mother's executor, in trust for a few hundreds she had saved in her husband's life from her pin-money, and also had in the house, his small paternal fortune, he could not appear guilty of such an offence to decency as to marry her immediately—nor in her situation could he introduce her as his wife. All parties therefore

therefore agreed the marriage should be defered until she was brought to bed.

"I pass over that interval of time, to the period when my unfortunate self came into the world,—a disgrace to my parents, and an outcast from society. Oh, what unjust, what cruel prejudices!—that an innocent being should suffer for errors she is unconscious of, and without any crime of her own, be stigmatized by undeserved opprobium — slighted by an illiberal, ill-judging world — and too often cast off from that natural affection, on which they have double claims, to compensate for the many mortifying and painful occurrences they are fated to endure!

"Forgive me, madam," said Fidelia, wiping the tears from her cheeks, "victim as I am to the prejudices of mankind, and the criminal pride of an unjust parent, I cannot but sensibly feel for myself, and many

many other unfortunate children who drink from the same poisoned cup, and have to lament their wretched existence.

"My father felt emotions of tenderness and joy; and such he would ever have acknowledged had he durst, but, alas! he had no character of his own—and in a short time became, from his easiness and irresolution, the very slave of the woman he loved. A nurse was procured for me who neither knew my mother nor her connexions.—I was an orphan child, to whom the good aunt was guardian; the widow of an officer who was killed abroad was my supposed mother, and affliction had so weakened her, that she died in child-bed.

"This story passed current with an ignorant woman; and one would suppose my real mother had given it equal credit, for she never concerned herself about me, nor

nor even ever saw me till I was five years old. My birth was an indelible disgrace she never could pardon, altho' I was unconscious of the infliction. At the expiration of six months from my grandmother's death, my cruel unjust mother was introduced as the wife of Mr. Douglas, to the surprise, and no less displeasure, of the friendly banker; who at that very period was looking forward to an union between my father and a young lady of good family and fortune to whom he was guardian.

"But the marriage was completed—my father was independent, and not accountable to any one, he had therefore no right to expect being consulted, though he felt it a compliment due to his friendship and connexion with the family. A house was now taken; and the aunt still continued to reside with her niece, and in fact, to govern the house. To this hour, I never

heard what the family connexions of my mother were, or from what county she came—on this head my father was invariably silent.

"Very soon after his marriage, and before it was generally known, a distant relation of his died; and resenting the injustice of my grandfather and uncle, bequeathed to my father five thousand pounds, though he had refused to advance a shilling to serve him in his life time. This addition to his income, and the advantages resulting from the banking-house, enabled the new married pair to appear very genteelly, and the beauty and fascinating graces of the young bride attracted general admiration. Whilst I was kept at nurse, totally neglected, three children were born, and acknowledged with pride and pleasure;—they had attendants and every indulgence, whilst the unfortunate being who had equal claims upon their tenderness

tenderness and humanity, was regarded as an alien to their blood, and a disgrace to her parents.

"I was about five years old when an event happened that threatened to derange all their schemes, and overwhelm my unnatural mother with indelible shame.

CHAP. X.

"THE woman who had the care of me, had a sister at Brompton, whom she sometimes went to see. With great importunity she had obtained of the aunt, *whose charity maintained the orphan of her friend*, a new white frock, and a pretty enough bonnet for me; and it seems in those days I was generally called a very beautiful little girl. My nurse was proud of my appearance, and really fond of me; —she took me with her to Brompton one Saturday, to stop with her sister till Monday.

"On

"On Sunday we were to walk in Kensington Gardens, which is a very fashionable promenade in England, from its vicinity to the capital, and as attached to one of the king's palaces.—"We were to stroll there to see the gentry." It happened that in turning an angle, I was running before my nurse, my feet tripped in the gravel, and I fell directly against the legs of a gentleman who had a lady hanging on each arm—another small party were close to them. The ladies gave a sudden scream, the gentleman caught me up, and in the same moment my nurse flew to me; but her eyes were arrested by seeing "my charitable guardian." "Ah! madam," cried she, dropping a humble curtsy, "don't be angry—you are surprised to see us here; but I hope poor little Fiddy is not hurt. Fiddy, my dear, (taking one of my hands, as the gentleman held the other, and was intently gazing on me) make your curtsy, and thank your dear good guardian for

your pretty——" Before she could finish the sentence my mother sunk down in a fainting fit.

"This drew off the attention of my father and the rest of the party; the poor lady was conveyed to a seat at no great distance, and my nurse, unconscious of the mischief she had occasioned, followed close to offer her services, whilst I hung at her apron.

"As we advanced, one of the ladies turned and looked at me—"What a beautiful child! how extremely like Mrs. Douglas!" this rouzed both my father and my guardian, involuntarily he caught hold of my hand,—"What are you about," exclaimed the latter, "attend to your lady, this is not a time to notice a child, whose heedlessness has so terrified her."

"She

"She pulled me aside, "Here, good woman, take her away, go about your business, we do not want your assistance."

"The woman, awed by the stern look of the speaker more than her words, drew me away, but not before she had also noticed the strong resemblance between the fainting lady, and her little Fidelia; and being rather shrewd, and keen in her observations,—the fainting of one lady, and the repulsive anger, and even terror in the other, immediately gave birth to suspicions in her mind, that her young charge was not so entirely an orphan as had been represented.—In short, she plainly told her sister, she verily believed that the sick madam was the mother of little Fiddy."

"If so be that's the case," returned the other, "I'll be sworn the gentleman is her father, for he looked ready to eat her." The conversation continued between them,

and young as I was, I understood enough to convince me that they believed the persons they were speaking of were my father and mother.

"This dwelt upon my mind, I asked a hundred questions, which were as freely and innocently answered.—I had heard other children talk of parents, but had been constantly told that I had none; which I often used to think was very odd. Now I eagerly caught the sound of father and mother to little Fiddy; and I could think of nothing else.

"My nurse seemed delighted to have discovered a secret, and not less offended that she had not been entrusted with it, therefore she very freely uttered her conjectures as certain facts.

"So imprudent is it to make half confidants in secrets, that in the chapter of possibilities

sibilities, may be in danger of being disclosed; and perhaps through the ignorance of the person so trusted with a partial knowledge, or a misrepresentation of facts.

"Yes, yes," cried she, fondling me, "my little precious has got parents, I am very sure; but poor thing, she is a bye-blow, and so they wont own her.—What a sin, and a shame! she is so very pretty, the first lord in the land might be proud of her!"

"Not a word was lost upon me. I asked why I was a bye-blow, and not to be owned? She supposed I was not born in wedlock; she had some difficulty to make me comprehend, why a child, born, when, and how it would, should not have a father and mother. I did not understand her distinctions about wedlock, and I pleased myself with repeating continually, I have a father and a mother.

"We returned home on Monday night, and on Tuesday the lady guardian appeared. I was the first who saw her—I flew to her,—"Oh, dear, I have a father and a mother!" She dropt into a chair; nurse was called for, and I was sent out of the room. Their conversation lasted some time, I can only guess at the purport by the consequences.

"When the lady was gone, nurse said, "My poor child, you have no father or mother.—The lady who was taken ill when you fell down, is no relation; though to be sure, she's very like you.—But what's worse than all, you are to be taken from me and placed at school." She burst into tears, and I protested no one should take me from my dear nurse.

"Several tender scenes passed between us, but in a few days came my guardian in a coach; and in spite of all my tears and

and struggles, I was torn from my good friend, and never saw her more—though to this hour, I have a tender remembrance of her kindness.

"We went a few miles from town, and stopped at an inn. Here to my surprize and joy I was received by the gentleman I had seen in the gardens. "Is it you, is it you," I exclaimed, "and wont you be my father?"—He was equally astonished, he clasped me in his arms, tears fell from his eyes.

"Absurd weakness!" the lady uttered, and he grew more composed;—still he caressed me. "She is the very image of my dear Anna, ten times more like than either——"

"Nonsense," cried she again, "your imagination misleads you; this pretty whim of

of your's is satisfied, and now I hope you will return to town."

"Call it not whim, 'tis natural affection, and a duty."

"Well, then, be it what it will, 'tis fit you return, as we have no time to lose."

"During this dialogue which was imprinted in my young mind, I had been fondly kissing the hands that held me; and when he stooped to embrace me, and I again saw his tears, I exclaimed, "Oh, I will go with you, I will be very good, if you will let me go with you, and love you so dearly."

"He jumped up,—"I cannot stand it," said he;—"Surely this is equally unjust and cruel." He darted out of the room, and the lady looked very much discomposed.

discomposed. I afterwards learnt that my father had insisted upon seeing me with an earnestness they could neither evade, nor refuse; but the permission was conditional, that he should by no means suffer me to believe he was any ways related to me.

" When he was gone, we had some refreshments;—after which we pursued our journey.

" We travelled that afternoon, and the best part of next day.

" My heart was uncommonly heavy, I was therefore very silent;—reflecting on my nurse, and yet more on the kind gentleman who had kissed and wept over me.

" The more my mind dwelt on him, the less I liked the lady I was with; who, tho' I had always been told I must love as my only friend, and to whom I was indebted for

for my clothes and support, yet as she never had shewn towards me any marks of personal attachment, I felt but little tenderness for her. And the ill-natured way in which she seemed to disapprove of the gentleman's kindness, by sending him away, gave me a strong dislike to her, and rendered me very sullen. But it happened that she was as little inclined to talk as myself, and therefore my assumed airs of resentment passed unnoticed.

"We came, at length, to a small village, and stopt at a large and very old-fashioned house, that struck me with terror. It had once been a monastery; and the old battlements, turrets, small casements, almost enclosed by the ivy that grew over the house, altogether gave it such a sombre and terrific appearance, that when we alighted, and I entered an immense large porch way,—I burst into tears.

"They

"They were no other ways regarded, than to draw on me the displeasure of my conductress; and I was obliged to accompany her to a parlour where I was introduced to, and welcomed by two middle-aged women.

"I was quickly given to understand that this was to be my residence, and some young persons taking me into a garden, giving me fruit, and playing with me, very soon engaged my regards; so that I beheld my lady guardian take her leave, without any sorrow, but the regret I felt at being so far from my nurse, and the kind gentleman.

"I was known in the house by the name of Fidelia Stanmore; and in that house I remained until I was fourteen.

"I often repined when I heard my young companions talk of their parents, receive little presents, and anticipate the delight of going home to see them at the vacations.

vacations. I had no home, no parents, and knew no other resting place than where I was. What a melancholy consideration to a thoughtful, intelligent mind.

"As I advanced in years, I frequently interrogated those who had the care of me, why I was not sent for, and where my guardian lived?—I could obtain no satisfaction.—I had no friends to relieve me, I was an orphan, supported entirely by a friend of my mother's who had no home of her own; but who nevertheless would always be my friend, and pay for my board and education.

"As my mind expanded, my disposition took a serious and melancholy complexion, from a review of my forlorn state.—And this turn was rather encouraged by the religious principles of the house; for it was a private catholic seminary. The happiness of a monastic life was constantly rung in my

my ears, and from considering myself as a forlorn, insulated being, without friend or connection, dependent on the existence of, or possible change of sentiments that might occur to my protectress,—I began to indulge a wish for this quiet, conventual life; as the only proper and sure asylum, I could, or ought to look forward to for my future residence.

"This inclination was strengthened by the most alluring pictures of content, and unqualified happiness, securely out of the reach of either sorrow, or care; and in this elysium, my heart eagerly panted to be received, as an inmate for ever.

"It was now nearly nine years since I had seen my guardian, and when her name was announced, and she entered the room, we were mutually surprized;—for if nine years had advanced me from childhood to a tall womanly girl of my age, that period of

of time had robbed her of almost every attraction she had possessed. She was pale, thin, and emaciated; a cloud of more than seriousness hung upon her brow, and her voice was no longer quick and peremptory, but changed and monotonous.

"Is it possible," said she, "that this great girl can be Fidelia Stanmore?"—"Are you, madam, my guardian who brought me here?—Ah! what is become of my good nurse, and that dear, kind gentleman who left us at the inn?" These mutual interrogatories were uttered almost in the same moment.

"One of the governesses answered her question, and led me towards her. Tears had forced their way from my eyes by painful recollections. "What," said she, coldly taking my hand, "what am I to think of these tears, do they spring from joy or sorrow?"

"Indeed,"

"Indeed," replied I, ingenuously, "I know not, my feelings are not definable even to myself." "Feelings!" repeated she, scornfully, "you will talk of sentiment and sensibility next, I suppose; but, child, I hate romantic misses—one is sick of feelings and sentiments, so no more of such stuff, I beg." She then asked a multitude of questions in a careless languid way, of my governess; whilst I, vexed and indignant at a reception so chilling, and reproofs so unmerited, endeavoured to repress these improper feelings, and to steel my heart against this cold hearted guardian —who made me but too sensible, that affection had no share in her motives for supporting me, and of course lessened her claims to my gratitude and regard.

"I was soon ordered to withdraw, nor did I see her for some hours; at length she came to me—"Fidelia," said she, "as I have made it a point of duty, from my affection

affection to the parent you lost, to support and provide for you. I have even put myself to some difficulties to concur with your wishes, and spare from my narrow income a sum necessary to place you in a convent, where you cannot be received, and be allowed to become a happy member of their peaceful community, without a handsome sum paid down towards the support of the house. But, my child, I will adhere to the duty I imposed upon myself—I shall ensure your perfect happiness, and I shall be satisfied. We shall set off to-morrow—get yourself ready, and be expeditious in packing."

"Without allowing me a moment to reply she left the room; and I knew not whether I ought to rejoice or be sorry that my destiny was now decided upon. One of the boarders came to assist me; no doubt she had her lesson, for she burst forth in congratulations on the happiness that

that awaited me, earnestly wished that such might be her future residence, and regretted the fate of those unhappy girls who were condemned to live in a turbulent, deceitful, narrow-minded world, where only high birth, and great riches, could ensure to them either respect or countenance. In short, she drew such examples, and named some victims in portionless girls, left to carve out their own subsistance, that I began to consider myself a truly happy being, to be removed from such possible and probable misfortunes, to a tranquil retirement among good and blessed people, who were beyond the power of worldly creatures to annoy their peace.

"Thus, more than reconciled, with a light and joyous heart, I took leave of my governess and companions without feeling any regret, or shewing any painful emotions; and though my companion seemed wrapped

wrapped up in the same pensive reserve, I strove to engage her attention by asking numberless questions, and, among others, earnestly enquired about my nurse and the kind gentleman. "You are very troublesome and talkative," answered she.—"Of the woman I know nothing, having neither seen or heard of her. The gentleman you will see again before we cross the sea; though I think he might be better employed than in meeting us."

"The remark I forgave, because I did not comprehend it, but the idea of seeing the only being who had shewn any tenderness for me, except my nurse, was a cordial to my spirits, indeed; and though I was forbid to talk, thoughts were free, and I fell to building the prettiest castles imaginable, in anticipating our conversation.

"At length we came to Margate, from whence I was told we were to embark for Dunkirk.—

Dunkirk.—I know not, if such were really the places, for I conversed with no one, nor had any information, but from her.

"It is impossible for me to give you any idea of the transport that animated my heart, when I beheld the gentleman whose image had been indelibly imprinted there; and tho' he too, was much altered, yet I knew him at once, and absolutely jumped into his arms. A very angry reproof escaped from my guardian; who attempted to separate us, but he held me fast.—"Content yourself, madam, with the execution of your plan, but do not attempt to restrain natural emotions, or deprive me of this last indulgence."

"She bit her lips, frowned, and regarded me with the most malignant expression of countenance I ever beheld.—Her ill-humour, however, did not prevent him from shewing me much tenderness; and remarking

ing the improvement in my person, with tears springing from his eyes. Mine overflowed, I kissed his hand,—" Oh, that I could live with such a kind heart as your's" cried I, involuntarily.

" You will meet with many such in the convent," observed my guardian, " but it it not pretty for young girls to be so free with gentlemen." I felt the rebuke, blushed, and would have withdrawn my hand.—He held it firm.

" How can you be so cruel?—By Heavens!" cried he, as if making a silent effort, " *she shall know herself, and me.*"

" Have a care what you are about," said she, looking frightened, " *remember your oath.*"

" Alas! I remember it but too well," answered he, in a mournful voice, " and will

will abide by it.—But that oath has bounds, I shall never see her more, and *she shall know* that she has a tender father."

"A father!" I exclaimed, "great God, a father!"

"Yes," said he, embracing me, whilst the big drops fell from his eyes,—"yes, my Fidelia, I am thy father, thou art my child; though cruel prejudice, unjust restrictions compel us to an eternal separation in this world.—My weakness, my folly, makes my child an outcast!"

"I could not, at that moment, articulate a word; I hung on his bosom, to which he repeatedly pressed me.—"Weakness, indeed, weakness unpardonable, and confession unprofitable!" cried the cruel woman, who eyed us with fury.—"To what does this imprudent declaration tend, but to mutual inquietude?"

"My heart would speak," answered he, "I could not restrain its emotions.—Ah! if you love my Anna, look in her face, and be cruel if you can."

"Cruel," repeated she, "is it not her *peace*, her *future happiness*, that *I seek*, equally with that of others?"

"It may be so," said he sighing, "and it must be so;—but things are now gone too far, not to reveal the whole. I will relate her story,—she will see that the choice she has made, is the best her unfortunate destiny will admit of;—she will know she has a tender father who repents of his weak injustice,—and I may at least have the consolation to correspond with my child, should I never see her more."

"You merely fritter away your oath," said she, "under the subterfuge that she is leaving the world."

"Leave

"Leave me, with my child," returned he, with a firm voice, "my oath is, and shall be sacred;—but I will, for one short hour, indulge a parent's tenderness."

"She quitted the room like a fury;—for me, I lay pressed to his heart, speechless, tho' not insensible to their altercation; and dreading, every moment, to be torn from him.

"After many endearments, and many painful struggles, my father related to me every particular of his family history, which I have intruded upon you.—Adding, that to conceal the disgrace of my mother, and my unfortunate birth, he submitted to the arrangements made by her aunt; but solemnly averred, he looked forward to the day of his marriage, as a period when I should be restored to their mutual embraces.

"From the time of my birth he had only been received as a gentleman paying his addresses to Miss Wheatly. They had quitted the house and neighbourhood where she was brought to bed, and had apartments in a very different part of the town.

"My poor father was more in love, more infatuated than ever; and impatiently waited for the time appointed, to unite him, for life, to his adored Anna.—Within a few days of its intended completion, when his heart overflowed with tenderness, she appeared extremely melancholy;—her sighs and sorrows almost distracted him,—he implored her to open her heart to him, solemnly protesting there was nothing in his power that he would not do, to give peace to the mind of his beloved Anna.

"In that moment of fondness the secret burst from her lips.—"She could not,"

not," she vowed, "she would not marry him but on one condition,—one solemn vow from him, to comply with her requisition."

"He was startled! "What could she ask, that it was possible for him to refuse? Speak," he cried, "assured of success, for I can deny you nothing within the chapter of possibilities."

"It was then this proud, unnatural mother, exacted from my too weak conceding father, a sacred oath, "Never to bring me home to his house,—never to introduce or acknowledge me to the world, as his child—or in any shape, to interest himself in my concerns, but to give me up solely to the care of her aunt, who should provide for me, give me a good education, and accustom me, from childhood, to look forward to a conventual life; which my inclinations could not revolt

against, as I should be a stranger to the world, unknowing of any connections, and educated in a private catholic seminary.

"On his pledging himself to observe these conditions, she would give him her hand; but if he hesitated taking the vow she required,—she solemnly protested she would take me away, leave England, and he should never see either of us more.—For never would she appear in the world, with a disgraced reputation, or leave it in the power of chance for me to reclaim her as a parent, after she was married."

"Such were the requisitions of a cruel mother.—My father sought to argue the point, and proposed avowing a marriage previous to his mother's death, and kept a secret out of compliment to her.

"This proposal only served to irritate her;—then she must appear as if unworthy of

of him, or the countenance of his mother. No, she would not relinquish or change her own plan, nor could she ever bear in her sight a child, who would constantly remind her of her own weak folly; and who would, therefore, be ever odious to her.

"In short, she prevailed—this unnatural woman obliged a weak, imbecile, infatuated man to take an oath the most sacred,—"Never to receive me as his child, or acknowledge me as such to the world, by any means directly or indirectly."

"The marriage took place, and I was the sacrifice! Had it pleased Heaven to have taken my life when I had the small pox soon after, what sorrows and regrets would have been spared to my poor father and myself. But the ways of Providence are just and wise, and far beyond our comprehension!

"The casual interview in Kensington Gardens had very nigh overturned all the schemes of my mother, by the artless address of the nurse, and the astonishing likeness between her and me; which had attracted the regards equally of my father and the party.

"From that moment she grew outrageous, and insisted upon my being carried off to the intended school, where it was not customary to receive pupils under seven years of age; but all-powerful gold removed this difficulty, and I was to be admitted.

"My mother had then three children happily born in wedlock, loved and caressed; whilst *I*, without any fault of mine, and her perfect image, as I have been told, for no traces of her face remain on my memory,—was despised, rejected, and considered as an alien to her blood. What injustice! what prejudice!

"When

"When my father understood I was to be taken from my nurse, he insisted upon seeing me,—upon meeting us on the road. In vain my mother employed threats, tears, and reproaches, it was almost the first time in his life he thought fit to judge for himself; he assured her his oath should remain inviolably sacred,—but see me he would. That interview I have related.—And I learnt also, that all the little indulgencies I had experienced in the school, were owing to his interference with the lady guardian.

"When the time arrived that was appointed for my voyage and everlasting seclusion, a period, so long wished for by the ladies, no entreaties could divert my father from seeing me for the last time,—and strongly against their inclinations, and remonstrances, he once more met us at Margate,—but without any intention of making himself known, till my joy and

tenderness threw him off his guard, and operated so powerfully upon his feelings, that the long smothered secret burst out, and he resolved to shew me at once, how dear I was to his heart, and deprecate, before me, that unpardonable weakness, and unnatural vow, which had been imposed upon him in an infatuated moment of love and confidence.

"Such, my dear madam, was the affecting relation of my sorrowing, repentant father, whom, however he condemned himself, with my whole heart I acquitted; for I saw his sensibility and wretchedness. I understood, also, from the tenor of the whole, that my birth was really disgraceful to my mother, injurious to her character in life; and that even innocent, and unconscious of the evils my existence produced, yet that *I* also, was implicated in the infamy and disgrace, and could only be known to be despised.

"These

"These reflections were scarcely to be expected from one so young. But the serious turn of my disposition had led me to read, and to reflect on causes and things more steadily than is common in girls of fourteen;—and when my father ceased speaking, overwhelmed with anguish and self-reproach—I embraced him with warmth, and with a composure that astonished him, besought him to tranquillize his mind, and to consider the destiny prepared for me, as the only one in which I could expect peace, and contribute to his comfort.

"I assured him that I was going to an asylum that now would be doubly endeared to me, as it would relieve him from painful altercations, and constant suspicions.—All I asked, all I wished for, was permission to correspond with him under such restriction as might be thought requisite; and with a solemn assurance on my part, that the indulgence I solicited, should never

never lead any one to surmise it was a parent I wrote to, but to a guardian, a friend of my *lost father's*—for such I must consider him, when once placed in a convent for life.

"With a flood of tears, he acceded to my request.—Near an hour was passed,—the most pleasingly painful hour I ever experienced.—At length my guardian entered with a countenance and manner so agitated, that tho' I heartily detested her, I saw she was angry, vexed, and humbled; and I spake to her without any encreased coldness.

"My father entered warmly into particulars of my conversation, and spake of my conduct and sentiment with a degree of enthusiasm that seemed greatly to alarm her;—but when she heard the conclusion, and my perfect resignation to her plans, her countenance cleared up, and she even complimented

complimented me on my judgment and candour. Nor did she make the least objection to a correspondence, under such *just and necessary regulations*, which no doubt would afford equal satisfaction to *Mrs. Douglas*.

"My heart did not subscribe to the latter assertion. I felt neither tenderness nor respect for a woman, who had so entirely cast me off from her affection; but rather an indignant sense of her injustice. I was content to be a sacrifice to the peace of my father, but I owed nothing to the pride and cruelty of a mother.—The one I pitied, the other I shuddered at.

"I will not describe the scene of taking leave. My parent more than once, seemed ready to break his vow, and take me back with him in defiance of peace and reputation; and I am convinced, had I been as artful as his wife, and as resolute in my determinations,

determinations, the affectionate, but weak heart of my father, would have submitted to my wishes.

"But we parted, and that moment will be for ever engraven on my mind; it was the triumph of natural affection, over unjust prejudices, and has reconciled me to human nature.—For I have learnt, since my residence in this convent, such instances of its depravity, such proofs of its duplicity and selfishness, that I have long since ceased to execrate my mother as the worst of beings which I once thought her.—And to regard my poor father as a melancholy example of a neglected education, the victim of a too tender mother, whose softness enervated his mind, encouraged a dangerous susceptibility, without any energy of character; and made him the dupe of artful interested people, who knew his failings, and profited by his weakness.

"I

"I have only to add," concluded Fidelia, "that my father had conditioned I should not take the veil, until I was nineteen. What his views or hopes were, I know not, for he has never explained, and I have no doubt but all our letters pass under the inspection of Mrs. Douglas.

"For my own part, after being sensible that I was not made for the world, nor the world regardful of me, I made up my mind to my destiny. I am now in my noviciate, in four months I shall take the veil.—Without hope or expectation of any worldly comforts, I look forward to the blessed mansions of peace and eternal justice, where I shall find a Heavenly Father, who will not reprobate unoffending innocence.

"Such, madam, is my story.—Forgive my prolixity, I do not often talk; and except Sister Therese, you are the only one to

to whom I have related it.—I doubt not but this remote convent had been the object of my guardian's search; for in the middle of a forest, but rarely frequented, its existence must be very little known,—and therefore answered their purpose.—But when I express my surprize and concern, that *you* should become a *voluntary* inmate here, do not suppose I have any desire to be impertinently curious. You have already silenced me, and I respect sacred commands as inviolable."

Hermine who had listened attentively to this interesting and melancholy story, pressed the hand of the amiable narrator to her heart, whilst tender sympathy sparkled in her eyes.—" Dear Fidelia, tho' I detest the cruel unnatural policy of two proud, selfish, and inhuman women; yet situated as you are, I can have nothing to oppose against the imperious necessity that seems to have destined you to renounce the world.—

world.—I lament, but I cannot change that destiny. Heaven only knows what mine may be; perhaps I shall have to wish a similar one with your's, and to languish for that tranquillity which you may hope to enjoy, independent of a turbulent world. But whatever it may be my lot to endure, I will venture to solicit your friendship and correspondence."

"You do me both honour and pleasure," replied Fidelia, "and be assured that my wishes and prayers shall be offered to Heaven for your peace and happiness."

These amiable young women, from a delicate consideration mutually felt, forbore to enlarge any further on their irreparable misfortunes;—they changed the subject of their conversation, and sought, by a diversity of ideas, to amuse those hours they were permitted to pass together, and in the entertainment of the present period,

to

to lose the remembrance of the past, and stifle their apprehensions of future unpleasant events.—Thus they became insensibly tranquil, and took lessons of the most patient sufferance from each other.

CHA

CHAP. XI.

LEWIS, now become the pupil and favourite companion of Father Francis, who was charmed with his docile temper, and unremitting diligence, made such uncommon progress in the course of two month's study, that he was not only amazed at his own improvement, but unbounded in his love and gratitude to his kind preceptor.

Once in that period he had accompanied the good father in a visit to Hermine, who silently

silently admired the elegance of his manners, and the propriety of his language.—She congratulated him on the happiness he seemed fully sensible of, in the advantageous change in the disposal of his time; and rejoiced that the wishes of his good mother had turned out to be perfectly agreeable to himself. Lewis bowed, and gracefully acknowledged his sense of her condescension in the interest she expressed for his welfare;—it would stimulate him, he said, to merit her favourable judgment, by attaching him to study, and an endeavour to repay by his diligence, the kind attentions of his revered benefactor, and the anxious tenderness of his beloved mother.

Agnes also, accompanied by Janette, had paid two visits to the convent; but she found much good-will was not altogether sufficient to bear up against the fatigue she endured from such long walks—and on her

her return from the last visit, she was quite ill for two days, and compelled to confess, "it *was too much for her*—she must give it up, and then truly she should be very unhappy, and hate that prating, curious, deceitful nun, who had persuaded the dear lady to leave her." Janette reminded her that the lady had promised to come and see her very soon,—and seemed very much vexed that she should take such long walks.

"True," said Agnes, "she did say so, but if my poor weak body was equal in strength to my inclination, I should think nothing of the walk; but I feel more enfeebled every day, and believe it won't be long first, before I shall be called hence to join my good Joseph, and my poor children. Well, God's will be done, I shall die with a good conscience, that to the best of my poor abilities, I have endeavoured to perform all my duties.—Thank Heaven, Lewis has now a friend in the worthy father,

ther, and I am sure the good lady will not forget him."

The good creature had a true presentiment from her encreasing weakness.—In little more than a week after this conversation, she gradually fell off from her appetite, and felt a lassitude, a feebleness that daily gained ground, until it was with difficulty she could get in or out of her bed.

Lewis, who constantly saw her thrice a week, plainly perceived the gentle decay. Against her inclination he sent to the village for a medical man, who at once confirmed his worst fears, and confessed that he believed a few days would terminate her existence.—Agnes was so sensible of this, that she wished once more to see Mademoiselle Hermine, and the good father undertook to bring her with him the following morning.

Previous

Previous to this, Agnes had requested to be left alone with him, and they had a conference for near two hours. When it broke up, the father said to Lewis, — "Grieve not, my son, that our gracious Father of the good and faithful, is about to deprive you of this worthy parent—she will soon enjoy everlasting happiness. She has performed her duty to you, and has consigned you to my care:—I here pledge myself before Heaven, to fulfil her desires to the best of my circumscribed power, and promote with my warmest zeal your interest and future advantage."

Lewis was deeply affected by the priest's earnest and voluntary kindness—he bowed upon the hand that pressed his, and though words were denied to him, the tear of gratitude was duly appreciated by the reverend father. That night Lewis watched by the bed of his mother; and the following

lowing morning at an early hour, Hermine hastily entered the room.

She flew to the delighted Agnes, who seemed to have renovated strength at her approach. A very tender scene followed—it appeared to Hermine that she was again an orphan—again was to lose a being who truly loved her; and the only one from whose kindness she could have hoped for protection, should her ill fortune oblige her to leave the convent. Agnes, after a little recovered from her first emotions, besought her young friend not to grieve for her, but to place her confidence in Father Francis, and rely upon his faith and protection. She recommended Lewis to her esteem in the strongest terms—"He has," said she, "my dear lady, the truest respect for you—one of the best of hearts, honest, upright, and sincere. I hope, and believe, he will merit your regard and approbation.

"Father

"Father Francis was surely inspired by Heaven to give peace to my mind, and be a friend to the fatherless. I have nothing to leave him that can do him much service, but I leave him to the care of Providence; if he continues good and virtuous he will never be forsaken. And, my dearest lady, let that never failing comfort be your's—you will one day overcome all your present troubles and afflictions; for never was the orphan unprotected, whose confidence and hope rests on the goodness of a gracious and all-merciful God."

Exhausted by talking, Agnes fell into a gentle sleep soon after, which they hoped would refresh her, as it lasted more than three hours; but when she awoke, Hermine, who had never quitted her bed-side, beheld a very visible alteration—her eyes were sunk and hollow, her breath short, tremulous and thick. She looked in her face, pressed her hand, then attempted to

speak, but her words were not articulate. Lewis leant over the bed—she looked alternately from him to Hermine, with a sweet smile diffused over her countenance; then with two or three quick gentle sighs, she closed her eyes for ever without a groan or struggle!

"Such is the death bed of the innocent and righteous!" exclaimed Hermine, kissing the lifeless hand she held; and laying it gently down, "Oh! my friend," said she, to Lewis, who was speechless, "may our all-merciful Creator grant to us the same peaceful serenity at our last moments, as free from sin and sorrow, as that blessed spirit now fled to Heaven!"

Tears gushed from her eyes, and she withdrew to another chamber, where she was soon after joined by Lewis and the good priest. The latter spake to both in the language becoming his cloth, but he had

had too much good sense to attempt at consolation in the first hours of affliction; for the feelings of the heart require indulgence, and are not to be repressed by moral sentences, or arguments adduced from cold philosophy—a good and virtuous mind will soon recover its energies, and with patient endurance bow to the will of the Almighty fiat.

Agnes had lived to close the eyes of her Joseph — to see her earnest wishes for Lewis in a fair way of being accomplished; and without a sigh of regret, she looked up with a well-founded hope in the mercies of God, for a state of eternal happiness.

Hermine passed the day at the cottage; she had sent for the mother of Janette, and to her and Father Francis she left all the necessary duties required on the melancholy event. She requested Lewis that he would sometimes visit her with the

worthy priest; and consider her always as a friend, warmly interested for his success and happiness. Lewis could say but little, yet her words were imprinted on his heart. He kissed her hand respectfully at parting —the emotions of both were but too apparent; but they were placed to the account of their recent affliction, without too narrowly investigating the nature of their feelings, or the source from whence they sprang.

Accompanied by Father Francis, Hermine returned to the convent. The death of Agnes occasioned no regret to Sister Marie — one troublesome friend of Hermine's was got rid of, she thought. The chain was broken—Lewis, she understood, would soon be disposed of, literally sent to seek his fortune; well, no matter how soon, the father was old, and not very healthy, he was not likely to live long.— And if these events took place before Hermine

mine came of age,—"Aha! my young lady," cried she, with malicious exultation, "you shall soon find the difference.—When you have no appeal, you will have good luck indeed to get out of this house if I oppose it."

The abbess shared in the satisfaction of the vindictive sister, for she hated Hermine; yet she feared her, because the dignity of her mind, and the propriety of her conduct, gave her a superiority over their selfish duplicity, under which her conscience shrank abashed, whenever they met. To humble this haughty young woman, and to have the disposal of her property, was the most ardent wish of her heart.

"But," observed the sister, "now Agnes is dead, to whose care can she have confided those valuables she confessed taking from the trunk?—Surely not to a

youth like Lewis. Besides, whatever belongs to him must be under the inspection of Father Francis, and he certainly would not be so base as to have any concealments from you."

"I cannot think he would," answered the abbess, "and yet he seems decidedly a friend to her; but most probably she took charge of them herself." "No, that I do not believe; she had nothing with her, and is too cunning to run the risk of another search in her chamber. I rather suspect the father may be tempted by his foolish partiality for Lewis and her, to become her confidante; and it shall be my business to counteract him if I can."

Some confidential plans were then concerted between them; and the first effect they produced was a change of measures.—A kind conciliating attention from both ladies to Hermine, which was also extended

to

to Fidelia; but which failed of impressing the minds of either with esteem or respect, as they well knew, they had some points to carry by their officious complaisance, and were consequently on their guard against both.

Agnes had been some days past conveyed to the peaceful grave, and Lewis had once visited Hermine, in company with the father. It was a dangerous indulgence to both,—but gratitude sanctioned it in the eyes of the lady, and poor Lewis gratified his heart, though his reason bade him to despair.

Fidelia now saw the period approaching when she was finally to renounce the world.—The very little she had seen of it, and the few persons she had known, left no regret on her mind for the sacrifice she was to make, when it was, she knew, to ensure the peace of her father; (the weak

instrument of a mother's pride and injustice) and to shield herself from the contempt, she was taught to believe, must inevitably be her fate, if she ever attempted to mix with society.

Whether from a view to reconcile her to her destiny, or in pursuance of the imperious commands of his wife, Mr. Douglas, had tacitly subscribed to that implied disgrace and reprobation attendant on her birth;—and though her natural good sense and conviction of its injustice and inhumanity, was forcibly impressed on the mind of Fidelia, she submitted with mild endurance to the prejudices of mankind, whilst her heart revolted against the cold unnatural conduct of her mother.

Such were her sentiments until Hermine sought her society, and by her tenderness and respect, rose her into consequence with herself; and inspired her with an attachment

ment so strong, for the only being from whom she had ever experienced any marks of affection,—that the idea of being torn from every possibility of enjoying her society, when Hermine should leave the convent, caused a great revolution in her mind and feelings; and imperceptibly gave birth to regrets the most painful,—to a repugnance daily gaining strength against the unjust and arbitrary commands which compelled her to take the veil.

Patient sufferance no longer made a part of her character; her melancholy encreased, a restlessness was visible in every action. Tears stood trembling in her eyes, heavy sighs issued from her bosom, and her faded form plainly spake that the mind and body sympathised in wretchedness.

Hermine grew alarmed; the alteration became too obvious to pass unnoticed,—and though she had imposed upon herself,

as well as promised to the abbess, that she would hold no conversation with Fidelia, relative to the engagements she was under to forsake the world,—or in any shape interfere with the destiny chosen for her by the imperious and incontrovertible commands of those who had a right, as they thought, to decide for her, yet, she could not behold her sinking under the pressure of devouring grief, without exerting herself to discover the cause, and if possible, to apply a remedy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

WHILST the sympathetic bosom of Hermine partook of the sorrow that evidently weighed down the spirits of poor Fidelia, and appeared to gather strength from each revolving day,—the abbess and her cabal also marked the encrease of dejection that preyed upon the health of the one,—and the anxious solicitude that was visible in the other. "You were wrong, holy mother," cried the malicious Sister Marie, "to permit that growing intimacy between those

those two romantic girls; the novice was resigned to, if not content with her proposed destiny. That imperious, designing, and artful young woman has assuredly wronged the trust you reposed in her, and inspired the other with a disgust for taking the veil."

"I am not altogether of your opinion," replied the abbess, "however greatly I dislike Hermine, I believe her integrity may be relied on, when she has pledged her word for the performance of any thing required of her. Whether pride or principle is the rule of her actions I cannot indeed determine, but I do not think she has broken her promise voluntarily made to me, relative to Fidelia.—But if we are wise, we must be blind to the alteration in her temper and appearance, and whatever change may be visible in either, must pass unnoticed; whilst an insinuating gentleness in our manners, must be so progressive as not

not to appear intentional, or call forth the particular observation of either."

"Nay, for my part I see not the necessity for any studied system," returned the sister. "Fidelia has no resource to encourage a change in her sentiments, because such a change could avail her nothing.—Her destiny is in your hands;—yet still I wish they had been kept apart."

"My views," rejoined the Superieure, in an elevated tone, that shewed she was displeased any one should doubt the infallibility of her judgment,—"my views extended beyond common consequences, or the observation of shallow understandings. I wished to encrease their intimacy when I beheld the growing attachment, for as Fidelia cannot, as you observe, ever indulge a hope to leave this convent, the warm affection Hermine seems to feel for her, may most likely eventually lead *her* to take the veil

veil also, to enjoy her friendship and society.—But I charge you all to avoid every thing tending towards persuasion;—be kind and attentive, but appear perfectly indifferent whether she remains here or not.—Relax nothing in your civilities to both, and let their emotions and melancholy looks pass unnoticed by all."

The docile sisters promised strict obedience, and their behaviour was so uniformly gentle and polite, without any apparent intrusion on their time or conversation, that Hermine insensibly began to think very favourably of the greater part of the sisterhood; although she still regretted the fate now fast approaching, that was for ever to exclude Fidelia from all worldly prospects.

One morning when they met she was greatly shocked at her pallid countenance, and the languor that pervaded her whole frame;—she seemed scarcely able to reach the

the chair.—Hermine caught her hand.—"My dear, dear Fidelia! you are ill," said she tenderly, "ah, let me instantly send for medical assistance! Why have I delayed it so long?"

"Stop, too dearly beloved Hermine," cried Fidelia, "stop; nothing the infirmary contains can be of service to me.—Medicines will not cure the mind's disease."

"You are then unhappy," returned Hermine, "alas! I feared to enquire, tho' my heart has hovered at my lips for some time past. But restricted by a promise that in the letter of it I conceived bound me to silence,—I have neglected the duties of friendship and humanity, and wounded my own heart, by repressing my ardent desire to know the cause of the sorrow that has long oppressed you. Forgive me, dear Fidelia, and if you think me worthy of your confidence,

confidence, speak—tell me the nature of this secret grief that almost distracts me to behold."

"I can refuse you nothing," said Fidelia, "though what I have to say will add pain to your generous sympathising bosom. Alas! I feel that I am a devoted victim, a sacrifice to a criminal indulgence of the passions, an oblation offered up upon the shrine of pride, to gratify an unnatural mother. Yes, my beloved friend, from your endearing conversation I have learnt to estimate the value of such a companion!—you have opened my eyes, you have extended my ideas, and given birth to sentiments wholly a stranger to my soul until I knew you. Yes, you alone are the cause!"

"*Me, I the cause!*" cried Hermine, hastily interrupting her, "is it possible that my affection has been the source of

your

your sorrows?—For Heaven's sake explain yourself."

"A few words will do it," answered Fidelia,—"but you are as innocent, as unconscious of the effect your kindness has produced in my weak imbecile mind. In short, every day encreases my esteem and admiration for you; and every hour adds additional regret, inexpressible grief, that the time approaches when the duties of my situation will tear me from that society, that delightful converse, which has for many weeks been the chief happiness of my life. Forgive me, Heaven," said she, crossing herself, "if thy devoted servant offends against thy laws by this impulsive tenderness, which militates against that total indifference to all worldly objects, which I am taught to believe is essential to my salvation; but surely the great Creator of mankind, whose precepts are universal love and good will, surely he never will condemn

condemn an innocent affection for a good, an amiable being, fashioned by his hands, and following his most holy laws!—No, my friend, my dear Hermine, no, Heaven will not condemn me, though I cannot be obedient to the lessons of the convent:—I cannot teach my heart that apathy which they tell me the purity of the sisterhood requires. You have taught me the more delightful lessons of friendship, harmony, and social love—and now behold I sink a martyr to my feelings. When a nun I shall rarely enjoy your conversation; and in a short time you will leave me for ever. Where then, but in the silent tomb, shall poor Fidelia seek to hide her sorrowing heart from self-reproach, and the cruel scorn of cold uncharitable enthusiasts!"

Fidelia might have gone on for an hour without interruption from Hermine, so great was her astonishment, so poignant her feelings of grief and compassion for this

this lovely young creature, whose wayward fate had condemned her to bury all her sensibilities, to renounce every social tie on earth; and by considering herself as an outcast from mankind, disgraced and despised, no resource to look up to, no friendly hand stretched out to preserve her, the whole universe was to her a blank, and her only asylum a monastic life.

And this ill-treated and forsaken being, she had unconsciously wounded to the very soul, by giving her new ideas, by rousing her dormant sensibilities, and by inspiring her with a taste, a love for the reciprocity of friendship, and the charm of mutual esteem and confidence. "Yes," she mentally exclaimed, "I have given warmth to the coldness of her heart, frozen up by the cruelty of unnatural wretches, who deserve the worst of punishments; and in seeking to console, and communicate pleasure, I have most unhappily opened that

store-house

store-house of tender affections which she was unconscious of possessing, because no congenial mind had met her's, or sought to gain her regards. Ah! how unfortunate has been to her the short period of our acquaintance, since her fate is inevitable, and I have encreased the measure of her regrets, to the ruin of her health and peace!"

Whilst these reflections passed rapidly over the mind of Hermine, she had continued gazing on Fidelia with a fixed countenance, where grief and tenderness was legible in every feature. Its expression struck the unfortunate girl, and kissing her hand, she said, "I have alarmed and shocked you, do not let your displeasure at my weakness add to the woes that oppress me. If it pleases Heaven to prolong my life, when far, far separated from you, the most pleasurable moments I can ever know, will be in retracing those happy hours

hours we have passed together; and in my orisons to our divine Creator, I shall never cease to implore, that his choicest blessings may be showered upon you."

"Oh, Fidelia! dear Fidelia!" exclaimed Hermine, tears gushing from her eyes, "how shall I ever forgive myself for thus murdering your peace!—In seeking my own gratification I have destroyed you!—Yes," added she, mournfully, "I feel that I have been more fatal to you by my friendship, than the most cruel of your persecutors. And do you think that I shall ever cease to deplore my own selfishness, and your consequent misery?—No, dear Fidelia, never shall I know peace more, if your health and tranquillity is a sacrifice to your affection for me."

"Too generous friend," said Fidelia, "cease to accuse yourself, for the attachment that binds me to you is the principal

cipal charm of my existence; and when I cease to love you, or can forget the happy hours we have enjoyed together, this heart must be cold indeed, and lost to all powers of recollection."

Hermine, starting, as from a deep reverie, pressed her hand, and in an energetic tone exclaimed, "Thank Heaven, there does exist a possibility that I may in some degree restore your tranquillity!—I solemnly pledge my honour that I will not leave this convent whilst you are in it, and I am permitted to converse with you, until the period arrives when my future destiny will be unfolded; of that, dear Fidelia, I am as ignorant as you are, but I give you my sacred word, that if I am bound by no superior duties, but am left sole mistress of my own actions, no temptations whatever shall draw me from this convent, whilst my society is essential to your comfort."

A flood of tears for some time impeded the utterance of those tender and grateful sentiments that overcharged the heart of Fidelia; but when she obtained the power of articulation, a most generous and affectionate contest ensued between the friends. Fidelia blushed at the weakness and inferiority of her own mind, in comparison with the energetic character, who could offer to forego whatever advantage might be her future lot in life, to seclude herself in that most dismal of all convents, in compassion to her weakness; impelled solely by the most unparallelled and disinterested friendship.

Conscious of a selfishness which her reason condemned, she caught a spark of that enthusiasm she admired in her friend, and proud to imitate what she admired, sought by an exertion unusual to her feeble mind, to overcome her own fruitless regrets, and prevent

prevent the generous Hermine from sacrificing herself at the shrine of friendship.

The effect which the nobleness of mind evinced by Hermine on this occasion, produced in the bosom of Fidelia, proves incontrovertibly the power which example has over young minds, whether as to good or evil; and forcibly demonstrates the indispensable duty imposed on parents and guardians, to be nicely circumspect in their choice of associates for young persons under their care.

Daily experience exemplifies how much more influence is obtained over us by example, than by the cold precepts of reason. Those whom we select for companions insensibly acquire a dominion over our hearts, and even their very faults, if we can ever open our eyes to see such in those we love, are beheld through the medium of partial friendship, that strips them of the odium

odium visible to others; and by the sophistry of attachment, and artful representation, those faults are changed into suffering virtues. Our generosity is then interested more warmly to defend and love an unjustly accused person, whose errors, in our opinion, were venial, and such as are but too common in poor human nature, where perfection is not to be found.

The mind of Fidelia had received but little cultivation—nature had done her part by giving her a sincere and an affectionate heart, a mild disposition, and a good understanding; but from the first dawning of reason, when capable of reflecting on her friendless situation, an habitual dejection had crept upon her spirits, and like a torpedo had palsied her feelings, and deadened every wish for improvement, or extension of knowledge relative to a world from which she was to be excluded. Her dormant faculties had been awakened at

first, by a desire of appearing amiable in the eyes of an intelligent young woman, who had condescended to seek her acquaintance; and from that intimacy she had derived incalculable advantages, that had taught her to appreciate the value of such a friend—and to regret in proportion the irreparable loss she must, perhaps very soon, have to endure, when the convent opened like a grave to entomb all her worldly comforts for ever!

Whilst these two amiable young women supported a generous controversy, each resolved not to be outdone in proofs of liberality and friendship. They were not aware that every syllable of their conversation was overheard by the inquisitive Sister Marie, who had got possession of a chamber adjoining to Hermine's, and by a mean and unwarrantable contrivance, had obtained the power to gratify the insatiable curiosity of a malignant spirit.

When

When their conference broke up, she flew to communicate the most pleasurable tidings to the abbess; for Hermine, by the predominance of her affection, and energy in any point she was earnest in establishing, had silenced the no less generous, but less powerful arguments adduced by Fidelia, against the voluntary engagement made by the former. It was at last settled, that the condition of Hermine's residence in the convent, should be an uncontrouled intimacy with Fidelia, whether as a novice, or a nun.

"Did I not tell you," said the abbess, exultingly, "that I had my plan well formed, and foresaw the event of this foolish predilection for the simple novice. Yes, yes, I understand the caprices of the heart, the weakness of human nature; by a little dexterous management we shall have both fast enough in good time."

Hermine, once possessed of her friend's secret, was too considerate to do things by halves. She well knew the pain a generous mind feels under a sense of obligation, it was her study therefore to prove she considered herself the favoured person by the affection of Fidelia; and by an exertion of more than common cheerfulness, a more animated tenderness in every word and look, to exemplify an ease and tranquility in her own mind, that might communicate itself to the bosom of her friend.

Whilst peace and returning health was beginning to dawn on Fidelia, and the intriguing Lady Abbess was priding herself on the success of her schemes, Lewis with unremitting diligence attended to the instructions of Father Francis, and acquired so much general knowledge of men and manners, in theory, displayed such an avidity to comprehend every useful science, that the good man, one day more than usually

usually pleased, told him, he was already much better qualified for a tutor and preceptor than two thirds of those who enjoyed both reputation and affluence by their abilities.

"You are master both of the German and French languages, you possess an excellent understanding, a mind of the greatest capabilities; and what is far more estimable than either, you have an uncorrupted heart, and the strongest desire of improvement. Upon the whole, my dear pupil, I think it high time to write to my friends to look about for a situation for you in some noble family. I know worthy people both in Italy, France, and England —tell me which kingdom should you prefer?"

Alas! Lewis preferred neither — the kingdom of his mind was in Ardenne Forest. He thought very humbly of his

abilities, but had they been ever so brilliant, he would have had the same repugnance to quitting that solitary forest, which contained all that was valuable to him in this sublunary world. But what had he to oppose against the good father's judgment and desire to serve him?—He stood alone in the world, without connexions or means of subsistence—to resist the will of his benefactor was to impose upon his benevolence. The small pittance he inherited by the death of his good parents would support him but a very short time, and he must either accede to the good father's plan, or return to his former employment. "Would to Heaven I had never quitted it!" cried he aloud, unconscious that the father was present waiting his reply.

"What do you mean, my son, what is it you regret having quitted?" asked he, astonished at his exclamation.

Lewis

Lewis, ashamed of his transport, and overpowered by his emotions, burst into tears. "My good young man," said the father, "open your heart to me—something oppresses you, deal frankly with me, and depend upon my best services."

Thus pressed, and being equally a stranger to falsehood or subterfuge, poor Lewis could no longer conceal what he termed, his inexcusable presumption and folly, in having nourished a passion, hopeless from the beginning, and degrading to the object he adored. It was the same unpardonable reluctance to be distant from that too charming lady, that had drawn forth the exclamation that led to this confession. He was sensible of his imprudence, of his ingratitude and daring presumption; he besought the good father's advice, that he might be enabled to subdue a hopeless passion, and gave himself up entirely to his direction.

Father Francis felt equal sorrow and regret at a disclosure of sentiments he had never once suspected—but regrets were fruitless, and to remedy the evil was now to be his most serious consideration.—Several conversations passed between them, and whether it was the wisdom and kindness of the worthy man, or that the long concealed passion of Lewis having burst from his bosom, by its ebullition had given ease to his over-charged heart, certain it is, the effect of their several conferences produced in the mind of Lewis a degree of composure, a placid resignation and submission to his future destiny, that delighted Father Francis.

This calm induced him to write immediately to his friends, concluding that by a separation from Hermine, the common effects of absence, might, added to the hopelessness, indeed almost impossibility that his passion should be encou-

raged

raged or rewarded, in a short time, tend to tranquilize his mind, and produce sentiments of more advantage to his future peace, and success in the line chalked out for him to pursue.

All parties being now in a state of convalescence, both bodily and mental, the time rapidly drew near when Fidelia was to fulfil *her* destiny by taking the veil.—Hermine had obtained an interview with the abbess, who was *prepared* to accede to her wishes with mingled dignity and graciousness, without making any studied compliments, remarks, or long speeches. Her manners and words were correspondent; and Hermine, unknowing that her request, and the answer to it, were foreseen, and prepared, with all the penetration on which she certainly valued herself, was effectually duped by the artifice of the Lady Abbess; and while she con-

gratulated herself on her success, the other triumphed in her deception.

Three weeks only were now to elapse before Fidelia was to renounce the world; and it was admirable to see her daily preparing with cheerfulness to embrace a state enforced upon her by her unnatural connexions. "I know not," said she, one day, "why my father extended my time of probation, but I sometimes wish I had been permitted to take the veil a twelvemonth ago. I have written to him of the exact time long since, and again within this month. He has not answered my first letter on the subject, which surprizes me; whether he will favour me with a farewell visit I know not, nor ought I to be anxious about it, when so soon to bid adieu to the inhabitants of a world I cannot regret, and when I am to look to a world beyond this for justice and eternal happiness."

She

She looked up with an angelic smile, then turning to Hermine, "Come, my dear friend, no grave looks, rejoice with me that I shall escape the temptation and sin that has entailed upon my mother eternal anxiety, terror, and shame, and one day, I fear, no less remorse for the disgrace and punishment extended to me.—Come, I have done with this subject for ever, let us go into the garden."

They rose to leave the chamber, when an event took place that deserves another chapter, from its importance to the future happiness of those, for whom we hope our readers begin to be interested,

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

THE two friends at the chamber door met Sister Therese almost breathless.—"Stop, stop, return," said she, "Fidelia, I have news for you; you will presently have a visitor."—"A visitor!" exclaimed Fidelia, "is it my cruel persecutor, my guardian, or is it, can it be my father?"

"Compose yourself, my child, it is your father,—for I heard him ask for his dear child, his Fidelia!—he is with the abbess.

I ran to prepare you.—Adieu, pray compose yourself." The sister had scarcely left the room before a summons came for Fidelia to attend the parlour.—"Pray, my dear friend, support me by your presence," said she, "I know not why I should be thus agitated, yet I wish my father had not come."—A second messenger came, "her father was impatient," with trembling steps she descended, and in a few moments found herself in the arms of a parent.

"My dear Fidelia, my long suffering child!" exclaimed he, "your sorrows are ended.—Patience now triumphs, and my child shall be welcomed to the house of her father!"

A faint groan escaped the lips of Fidelia, and she sunk senseless from his arms before he had the power to support her.—The usual remedies were administered, and she soon returned to life. "My father," said

said she faintly, "in less than three weeks, ——" "I know what you would say," returned he, embracing her, "I have been in agonies lest I should have mistaken the time; but, thank Heaven all is safe. My dearest girl look up with hope and confidence; I know, I am sure, a monastic life is not your voluntary choice."

"But if it should be proved to you," said the abbess, "that your pious daughter has long since renounced every worldly expectation, and looks forward with hope and joy to the hour that consecrates her to the service of Heaven,—I trust you will not presume irreligiously to exert any rights, or make use of any persuasions to bend her mind from this holy purpose, and in so doing, draw down the vengeance of Heaven upon her and yourself."

"My child," answered he, "is now a free agent; I will speak only facts, and leave

leave her own election unbiassed and uncontrouled. To begin, my Fidelia, that too faithful aunt, and I am sorry to say, your greatest enemy, is now numbered with the dead.—I have also buried a lovely and beloved girl near ten years of age, which I regarded as a just and deserved retribution, for we idolized her." Here he stopt for several moments much agitated, and then proceeded.

"My wife, your unfortunate and now repentant mother, is confined to her room totally helpless by the palsy;—and this accumulation of sorrows we have deserved by our unnatural treatment of you.—I seized the moment of remorse which burst on the mind of your unhappy mother, and asserted those rights I had so long resigned into her hands, by insisting upon restoring you to the paternal roof and the arms of your parents. Your elder brother, an amiable youth of seventeen, for the

the first time heard he had a sister; he conjured me to set off, and let him accompany me—he now waits in the outer parlour.—Your mother is impatient to receive your forgiveness, to enfold you in her arms; and I, my dear child, I can now indulge my feelings without infringing those vows I ought never to have made. Such is the situation to which I invite you. Yet if your heart revolts against us—if Heaven as a punishment for our sins, has entirely estranged you from your parents, your relatives and country—if you cannot find *happiness yourself*, in so largely contributing to *our future peace*,—You are free, my dear, much injured child—you are at liberty to choose for yourself, and denounce us wretched for ever!"

The Lady Abbess seemed prepared to begin her harangue; Fidelia stopt her by a respectful motion of her hand. "I wish to spare you and myself unnecessary trouble, madam,

madam, I cannot for one moment deliberate on the liberty allowed to me; my election is made, nor do I fear the wrath of Heaven if I forsake this house to give peace and comfort to my earthly parents. I humbly trust I shall observe every religious duty, as fervently in my closet, as in a cloyster.—More active duties, more beneficial to my fellow creatures assuredly I may perform; and to obey the will of my father, will not, I presume to hope, draw on me the displeasure of our Almighty parent.—But my dear father, *I have a tie so strong*—obligations of such magnitude to this dear, amiable young lady, that no worldly allurements can possibly supercede. In taking me from her, you can have but a small share of my heart; and your poor Fidelia will be joyless and unhappy, even in the arms of her parents, if she leaves the sister of her soul to whom you are indebted for every advantage I possess."

Here

Here a most affectionate contest ensued between the friends. Fidelia protesting she would not go without her—the cruelly agitated Mr. Douglas entreated Hermine not to deprive him of his child, but to consent to accompany them—and the abbess enraged could scarcely contain herself within the bounds of decency, when she lectured Fidelia on her own apostacy, and her no less wicked endeavours to pervert the mind of Hermine. At length the tears and entreaties of her father, but more the firm and avowed resolution of her friend, from that hour to break off all further acquaintance or correspondence with Fidelia if she did not comply with the requisition of her parent, determined the mind of the latter to submit to the painful separation she found it impossible to avoid. But she submitted with such evident reluctance, and so warmly expatiated on the virtue and goodness of Hermine, and her own immeasurable obligations to her, that Mr. Douglas

las repeatedly urged her to go with her friend to England. —Hermine, however, to qualify her refusal, assured Fidelia she would continue to study the English language preparatory to making her a visit,—if such an arrangement was in the chapter of possibilities at a certain period; Fidelia who knew to what she alluded, in the cruel uncertainty of her future destiny, felt but little comfort from such an engagement, tho' she knew the word of Hermine might be relied on as far as her power extended.

Mr. Douglas concluding the agitated spirits of his daughter wanted rest, and the society of her friend, would not then introduce his son, and by her advice, he proposed going to the monastery of St. Hubert, and there claim the hospitality of Father Francis. He charged her to be prepared by the following day, as every moment would appear an age in the anxious heart of the sorrowing mother.

Great

Great was the disappointment, and almost intolerable the vexation that overwhelmed the Lady Abbess and her cabal at the secession of Fidelia from the community. With extreme difficulty she had repressed the violence of her indignation, but the decided resolution of Hermine imposed bounds to her rage, and induced her to express only regrets for their loss of Fidelia as an offering worthy of Heaven; without mingling any asperity in her laments at the resolution she had taken of foregoing the prospect of peace and tranquillity, to mix with a turbulent world where temptation and sin would perpetually assail her. She honoured Hermine with some delicate compliments on her strength of mind, in nobly persevering to do what her conscience told her was right and proper; and augured the happiest effects both to her worldly and eternal welfare, from the energy of her character.

Where

Where is the mind strong enough to resist the insinuating voice of delicate praise, when conscious of having performed a duty at the expence of feeling? Hermine had resisted the strongest temptation this world could offer her, to leave a situation never agreeable to her, and now when deprived of the only charm that made it bearable, the society of Fidelia, she had nothing to console her for that irreparable loss, no comfort to hope for, not a single being left to interest her heart, or with whom she could hold unreserved communication.

Thus thinking the kindness of the abbess was most opportune to gratify her self-love, and raise the sacrifice she had made to principle, even in her own estimation, as something beyond the obligation of a duty, almost an act of superrogation, which entitled her to praise and esteem—Hermine was gratified, and the wary abbess had found the road to her heart. Flattery direct,

rect, she would have despised, but she took credit to herself in the violence she had done to her inclination; and in this vulnerable corner of her heart, she lay open to the artful blandishments of the abbess.—In short Hermine was not without her sex's weakness, tho' she had energy of character. In a thousand instances we may have observed the good effects of complimenting people on virtues which sometimes there is only a semblance of,—for a mind of any feeling, whether urged by principle or shame, will often-times be struck by undeserved praise, and hasten to justify the judgment that flattered their self-love, by doing more than assuming a virtue — by an exertion of their powers to make those virtues their own, which in due time may have the wished for effect in the tenor of their future conduct.

Hermine wanted no such stimulative to virtue 'tis true, but she enjoyed the just praise

praise she deserved, and her mind was the more fortified to resist the almost *irresistless* endearments and persuasions of her friend; and when Fidelia was silenced by a determination she well knew would never be receded from, her looks spake unutterable things, and compelled Hermine to hasten from her chamber, and return to her own, now more than ever, solitary apartment.

When the friends met the following day, it was but too visible that they had passed a sleepless night; but both had prerosolved on forbearance, in pity to the feelings of each other, and therefore only common salutations took place. In a short time they were summoned to the parlour; and to the extreme surprize of Hermine, with Mr. Douglas and his son came Father Francis and Lewis. The latter seemed extremely agitated, nor was our heroine quite composed. It was the first time Fidelia had seen him, though his

name

name had been often mentioned by Hermine, when speaking of the worthy family who had been her friends.

The surprise and agitation became general. Young Douglas was presented to, and enchanted with his new-found sister, whose sweetness of manners, and tender reception of him, seemed to penetrate his heart. Hermine he addressed as a superior being—he had heard her character, and adored her for her kindness to Fidelia; but her incomparable beauty, the dignity of her manners, and the air of fashion that accompanied her words, struck him with awe and admiration.

Lewis had no utterance to his feelings, for they were of the most melancholy complexion. The good Father Francis alone preserved his usual composure; and after the first general salute, whilst Mr. Douglas was joining the hands of his son

and

and daughter, he addressed himself to Hermine,—"My dear daughter, I am the harbinger of joyful news—the interest you have taken in the fortunes of this good youth, assures me you will be happy to hear he is in a fair way of being most comfortably situated, and for which he is in a great measure indebted to you."

"To me!" exclaimed Hermine, with great emotion.

The father then explained.—"In a conversation with Mr. Douglas the preceding evening, that gentleman had expressed a wish that his son, being now on the Continent, could meet with a worthy intelligent person to travel with him through Germany, Italy, and France, to perfect him in the languages, and give him a just idea of men and manners in the different kingdoms. I gladly availed myself of this opportunity," continued the

father, "to speak of Lewis, as he deserved to be spoken of. Of men and manners he knew nothing; of languages in the purest style, of honour, integrity, and every divine and moral precept as spontaneous from the heart, he knew every thing—of the world he was ignorant, but he had a mind not to be corrupted by the artificial allurements of pleasure, nor swayed by the prospects of interest or fortune.

"With such a companion I told him he might trust his son; and an intelligent, honest, travelling valet, I had no doubt, but on enquiry, some friends of mine at Thionville, could procure for him. In short, my good daughter, Lewis is already fixed as a companion, and something of a preceptor, to young Douglas. I have sent off a courier to Thionville, and Mr. Douglas leaves his son with me till I can settle their projected tour upon a proper plan."

Hermine

Hermine had with the greatest difficulty struggled to repress the emotions she felt at this unexpected and not very pleasing intelligence. "Ah!" she mentally exclaimed, "is this Mr. Douglas is to deprive me of all I most love or value upon earth. When Fidelia leaves me, I have no longer a companion I love; and if Lewis quits the forest, perhaps for ever, I lose the only friend whose kind offices I might depend upon." She raised her downcast eyes from this painful recollection, and met those of Lewis, fixed on her with a look of such touching melancholy, that unable to bear their expression, she rose, and hastily uttered a few unintelligible words of congratulation on his prospects, and then joined the Douglas family.

Fidelia caught her hand, and burst into a paroxysm of tears, unable to speak a word. Her father most earnestly repeated his invitation, and besought her to consider

sider the home of Fidelia as her home; and whatever her destiny might be, always to remember she had friends who would fly to meet her wherever she should be, and conduct her to a house that would be honoured by her residence in it.

Hermine felt the full fordel of this kindness, and made a suitable return; but the parting between the two friends cannot be described, and only hearts of true sensibility can form an idea of. At length Mr Douglas tore the reluctant Fidelia from the arms of her friend, who flew immediately to her chamber, and shut herself in for the rest of the day.

It was not without pain that young Douglas relinquished the pleasure of returning with his sister, whom he already loved and admired; but the natural propensity in juvenile minds for travelling, to explore those delightful countries represented

sented as the garden of Europe, to behold those indescribable curiosities of nature and art, the inexhaustible theme of every writer both ancient and modern, and lastly, the unexpected pleasure of having a young companion, in the room of a surly, pedantic pedagogue, who would embitter every expected delight by harsh restrictions and eternal moralizing—all these motives combining, served to console Frederic Douglas for the loss of an amiable sister, so lately found that he could hardly be supposed to appreciate her worth, or have an affection for her yet rooted in his bosom.

But what was to console Lewis, to tranquilize his mind, when separated from Hermine, who now more than ever demanded the tender solicitude of a friend, when the only one she had selected was torn from her?—Alas! no hopes, no prospects afforded to him the least mitigation of his regret and affliction—his heart was

agonized, he would have given the world, and every thing in it, but Hermine, that he was still a humble wood-cutter in the forest, content and unaspiring, as when he toiled to support his aged relatives. The knowledge he had gleaned only served to make him wretched, and he was now a passive instrument in the hands of Father Francis, to be directed by his will and pleasure. "Yet, what ingratitude!" exclaimed he, as his heart smote him, "how basely do I requite the kindness of that good man!—Can he derive any benefit from my advantages, is it not solely my good, my future welfare, that he has in view?—Oh! yes, I know, I feel, the full weight of my obligations, but, nevertheless I am very wretched; I cannot dissemble with my own heart, nor I fear conceal my sorrows from the penetrating eyes of my benefactor!"

His soliloquy was interrupted by Mr. Douglas,—"The good priest tells me, I

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am to pass a week here before we begin our tour, and he is to give us a full freight of information for our mutual benefit.—Mean time you must fashion my language more correctly, for I know my French is defective, and I will teach you the rudiments of the English. All this business between the friar and ourselves, with a visit sometimes to the convent to see that divine friend of my sister's, and possibly a few pretty girls with less of the goddess than that dignified Juno—with all this mixture of profit and pleasure, we may contrive to slip through this said week tolerably well."

The gaiety of heart which appeared to animate young Douglas, by no means corresponded with the feelings of Lewis; he had not a spark of levity in his composition, nor could any expected amusements give ease to the torture of a mind diseased.—Douglas, looking earnestly in his face,

exclaimed, "You seem ill, can I get you any thing?" "No," replied Lewis, endeavouring to rouse himself, "no, Sir, I am not ill, that is I have no bodily complaints.—And possibly you will laugh at those local attachments I feel to this forest and its environs, from whence I have never strayed; and frankly confess, it is with unutterable regret that I shall quit the scene of my juvenile years, where labour was sweetened by health and content, and where my hopes and wishes were bounded by my own power of gratifying them."

"A fine sort of vegetative life!" cried the other, with a loud laugh, "so you prefer being a feller of trees in the romantic, gloomy Forest of Ardenne, to emerging from obscurity, and becoming a denison of the world."

"'Tis not unnatural," replied Lewis, "to prefer the good we possess to the doubtful

doubtful prospect of experiencing at least a concomitance of evil, with the good we have in view;—else why are all those lessons of cautious prudence, of virtue, integrity, and ecoriomy, so sedulously inculcated by the good father, but to guard me from temptations I have never experienced, were it not certain I must encounter with them in this world so new to me?"

"Upon my soul," exclaimed Frederic, "you are in danger of becoming a stoic, a philosopher of the woods at nineteen! I cannot choose, but laugh that my intended youthful preceptor is absolutely a novice, and with all his profound acquirements, must draw upon me for his knowledge of life;—an excellent joke this! But never mind, you shall moralize and teach me languages in the morning to furnish my head, and I will take the office of a preceptor at night, to shew you the world and its delightful varieties,—to humanize your ideas,

and instruct you in the language of the heart."

"It must be confessed," said Lewis, "that at seventeen, your ideas seem to be pretty extensive; and I see very plainly that I am perfectly unqualified for the station allotted to me through the partiality of the good father."

"You never was more mistaken," returned the other, "you are the very thing. I should detest and despise an old pedantic, conceited, austere governor;—I should lead such a one a wretched life, and fall into a thousand errors from an obstinate aversion to his tedious homilies, and purposely to vex and mortify him.

"Now you are very good it seems, and quite wise enough to instruct me, in all I want to know; that is a competent knowledge of languages, and all the good max-

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ims you have picked up in the forest, and under the sage instructions of the good priest.—As to the extension of my ideas at seventeen,—poor fellow, you announce at once your ignorance of the world by your observation.—Why, with us a youth of seventeen is a thorough adept in every enchanting system that the great and the gay voluptuaries of pleasure have established as the test of fashion.

"Formerly indeed, there were obsolete customs of confining youth of both sexes, from a knowledge of mankind and its manners, under the care of *wise* and *pious* folks, until their precepts and examples were engrafted upon the hearts of their pupils, and stupified them into good domestic animals for life. But thanks to the enlightened manners of the age I live in, French Abbés, (that possibly could not live in their own country, but condescend to disburthen the gentry in England of

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their money and their morals,) take the lead in the direction of youth;—and as their general system of education is lax in the extreme, and their sole view to please the pupil, and blind the parents, they rarely give us cause to complain of restraint, or bore us with too many lessons.

"I had a devilish good natured fellow, and we did very well together;—kept each other's counsel, and made my unsuspecting, easy father perfectly happy.—Besides, he was the darling of my mother, and that was enough. About eight months ago the poor Abbé died of a putrid fever in three days from being taken ill, and his disorder being so pestilential, none of us could see him; though I have been told he frequently called upon my name, and implored my pardon for the injuries he had done me, and hoped God would forgive him for the sins he had committed against *me*.—The poor wretch raved to be sure,

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he must have lost his senses, for no injuries had he done me;—on the contrary, he was the most obliging fellow in the world.

"Well, I lost my friendly governor, we were all sorry; as to my mother, she has never held up her head since, and is now confined to her room, for life they say, in a palsy.—I was resolved against having another censor, lest I should not meet with one equally kind and lenient as my former one;—and the difficulty of finding a travelling companion, has till now suspended that scheme from taking place.

"The death of my young sister, and the illness of my mother, produced to me the surprising discovery of this Fidelia, pent up in a cloyster.—What a devilish lucky escape for the poor girl,—to change a nun's vocation for a life of joy and fashion! I gladly came with my father, delighted with any thing so novel,—and being so far advanced,

advanced, my good dad was desirous that I should proceed, if a worthy companion could be found. Such a companion as I could wish, my good genius has pointed out, and mutual improvement shall be the order of the day;—for my little Abbé, though his French, (between us,) was confounded patois,—was yet perfectly well acquainted with life; and has initiated me so thoroughly by theory, into the customs and manners of France and Italy, that I have no doubt, *though only seventeen*, but I shall have the pleasure of conveying information to my sage preceptor, who is *two years older*."

Lewis had attended to the strange little history of this *knowing youth*, with equal astonishment and disgust.—His mind revolted against such a companion, whose levity, and lax principles promised him neither honour nor pleasure. If the young men of the world in general, were proto-

types

types of Frederic Douglas, what a strange figure must he make among such, with manners and ideas so different?

Frederic rouzed him from reflection by a tap on the shoulder.—"Come, come," said he, gaily, "con over this first lesson of mine another time, let us go to the convent now."

"To the convent," repeated Lewis, starting, "who do you want to see there?" "Why, the divine, beautiful friend of my sister; though between ourselves, she is too much of a divinity for me. Young as she is, she looks so dignified, as they call haughtiness, that I would rather wish to see what sort of girls are buried there, who would be thankful for a young fellow's notice."

Again Lewis stared at him, and in rather a disturbed voice, told him, "that it was not likely Hermine would receive his visit; and

and much less probable that he would see any girls, for that he had never seen one, not even Fidelia, till the preceding day.

Douglas looked very blank, and very incredulous, but humming a tune he left the room; and Lewis rejoiced that he could retire and communicate what had passed to Father Francis.

Young Frederic mean time walked towards the convent with an intrepidity acquired by the corrupt principles of a dissipated preceptor, to whose care he had unfortunately been confided by a weak father, governed by an imperious woman, who chose her son should have a French governor, under her own eye; and this man quickly discerning her foibles, and the little authority Mr. Douglas possessed in his own house,—payed his court so effectually to her vanity, that in a short time his will and pleasure directed every movement of her's;

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the ill-judging mother mistakenly prided herself upon her son's forwardness,—applauded and encouraged sentiments and actions that deserved the severest reprobation; and was the ruin of the youth's morals and health, by a criminal indulgence of his irregularities.

The scandalous chronicle went further, and assigned a still more odious reason for the dissipation she encouraged, the unlimited power the Abbé had obtained over her heart.—But whether this report was false, or true, 'tis most certain her complaisance irreparably injured her son. Her own health was considerably impaired by a constant pursuit of what are falsely called pleasures; and a dejection of spirits from the death of the Abbé, so compleatly shattered her nerves, that on the recent loss of her only acknowledged daughter, she had been seized with a paralytic affection, so as to lose

lose the use of one side, and was supposed to be incurable.

She had besides shortly before witnessed the death of that aunt, whose vanity and affection had led her into the most unjustifiable proceedings to aggrandize her niece, and to preserve her reputation. But a death-bed is a scene that withdraws the veil from all deception, and discloses to our view the events of our life free from all false covering.

She had lamented her treatment of Fidelia, and regretted every circumstance of her behaviour to Mr. Douglas, and his unoffending child. She conjured her niece to send for her, and to acknowledge her.

This last request, however deeply affected by the penitence of her aunt, she could not resolve to comply with. Reputation

pitation and vanity equally militated against it. But when overtaken by a dreadful malady that seemed to be the grave of vanity, and to extinguish every spark of pride, when disease and solitude gave birth to the most painful retrospections, and the innocent devoted Fidelia stood before her as the object she had injured, and whose wrongs had drawn on her the chastisement of Heaven, and the loss of her darling girl, remorse occasionally seized upon her heart, and she one day regretted most bitterly her reprobation of an unoffending child.

He eagerly laid hold of the favourable moment to propose her recal, and produced a letter he had that morning received from the poor girl, announcing the near approach of the period when she was to take the veil. This letter and his entreaties at length obtained her reluctant

consent

consent to change the destiny of Fidelia, and the following day he was on the road to the continent.

The consequences we have already seen, and after this necessary digression we shall follow young Douglas to the convent, where, addressing the porteress, he desired to see Hermine. She recognised his person immediately, and was impelled by two motives to refuse his request. The defection of Fidelia was by no means a recommendation to her brother—they owed him a grudge on her account; and to indulge a young man, who was no relation, with an interview, unsanctioned by any claims, was against their rules—was she not also apprehensive of consequences unpleasant to the community, from the appearance and persuasions of a very handsome youth.

Thus considering, she decidedly gave a negative to his request. He insisted, he entreated,

entreated, he implored her to carry a message to Herman;—all his endeavours to sooth her were fruitless, she was immoveable. Disappointed and enraged beyond all endurance, and but little accustomed to have his desires contradicted, he flew into the most violent rage imaginable, loaded the poor woman with execrations, beat the bars of the grate, swore he would set fire to the convent, make a bonfire of the old women, and carry off all the young ones; and in short laid about so handsomely with his stick and his threats, that the poor woman ran into the house, exclaiming, a mad boy was going to set the convent on fire and burn them all!

Out came hobbling and running the Lady Abbess and her community of virgins, terrified out of their senses, for fear had magnified a single object into a host of savages; but when they all rushed trembling into the parlour, and beheld at

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the grate a slim, elegant youth, recollected by some of them as Fidelia's brother, they stood aghast, staring at each other whilst he, excessively delighted with the terror he had created, burst into repeated shouts of laughter; and before they had recovered from their fright, he was still more gratified, by the abrupt entrance of Hermine, and several young ladies, whom the uproar had also drawn to the parlour.

The moment he saw her, he exclaimed, "Dear Mademoiselle Hermine, have pity on your friend's poor persecuted brother—here is the whole community in arms against me, threatening to burn, destroy, and annihilate me for bringing to you a simple message from the good Father Francis."

If Hermine was astonished, the good nuns were no less so.—The abbess called to Sister Agnes for the solution of this

strange

strange business. The porteress, after crossing herself most devoutly, passionately exclaimed, "that he had abused and insulted her, had threatened to set the house on fire, and had never mentioned the name of the good father."

"My dear good mother," said he, "far be it from me to contradict a *pretty lady*, (she was on the wrong side of sixty) but I fear your juvenile emotions when I approached you turned your brain, and induced you to fancy all this fairy tale that you have amused the ladies with."

Before the porteress could do more than tell her beads and lift her eyes preparatory to speech, her tormentor proceeded, bowing profoundly to the Lady Abbess, "Most excellent and respectable Lady, to your unquestioned justice I appeal—my errand was a simple enquiry after the health of that young lady, whose wisdom and fortitude

titude we all so much admire, in preferring her duty to worldly temptations. 'Tis true I requested to see her and deliver my commission in person, but I prefaced my boon in the humblest manner, and can no ways account for the violence with which the porteress assailed me. I besought her to moderate the fire of her zeal, and at *that word* she flew from me like a maniac. When to your unerring judgment, to that benevolence and candour which beams from your expressive eyes, I trust the goodness of my cause, ready to bow submissive to your decree,—I believe no worthy lady in this presence, will suppose I bear the effrontery of guilt;—but rather possess the consciousness of innocence."

Never had such an harangue reached the ears of the wonder-struck abbess, or her astonished virgins.—The former delighted by the respect and admiration with which

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he seemed to regard her, had "unknit her angry brows," and smiled ineffably sweet on the youthful orator.

In vain poor St. Agnes attempted to speak, and shook her head and fist against the deceiver.—She was silenced by the gracious lady, who after receiving another dose of delicate flattery, ordered the sisters to withdraw, and permitted Hermine to remain alone for a few moments to converse with her friend's brother.

No sooner was the coast clear, and Hermine advanced with surprise, doubt, and inquietude in her countenance, than he burst into an immoderate fit of laughing.—"Crown me with laurels, bear me on a triumphal car, for I have deceived St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins!—Oh, what a charm is flattery to the ears of an antiquated lady!—You see even the pious nuns swallow it as glibly as they

do the wondrous miracles of their faith. Ah, ah, ah, with what terror and fury the old girls burst in;—when lo, the lion was turned into a lambkin, and they were ready to worship and crown him with flowers."

"Pray, Sir," said Hermine, with an air of dignity, "let me understand you—did you bring any message to me from the good father?"

"Not I, faith, I stole off purposely to enquire after your health as became the brother of your friend, and this Cerberus of a woman you call porteress, refused to let me see you; and so, I believe we both fell into a passion, which answered all my views by bringing you here."

"I know not," returned she, "how far *I am obliged* by your attention; but certainly I can never wish a gentleman should forfeit

forfeit his integrity out of any consideration for me. You must allow me to say, therefore, that I totally disapprove of your present conduct; and though the tender regard I bear to Fidelia, will entitle every one connected with her to my kindness and civilities, I can never esteem, or countenance, even *her brother*, when he can acknowledge himself guilty of such a direct violation of truth, without blushing."

With a cool bow she quitted the parlour, and left him to chew the cud of vexation, and return home to his dinner with what appetite he could find.

CHAP. XIV.

WHILST young Douglas had entered upon a frolic that terminated so little to his satisfaction, Lewis had faithfully reported to Father Francis the conversation between that gentleman and himself, without any other comment than to observe, "he felt himself perfectly unqualified to attend on such a knowing youth, whose manners, as far as he could judge, seemed too free, and even licentious, and his conversation interlarded with expletives shocking and immoral, and denoted, in his opinion,

opinion, a depraved imagination, if nothing worse." The father heard this account with real concern.—Mr. Douglas being a catholic, a man of family and fashion, he had found himself very much disposed to accept the hasty trust reposed in him of providing a companion for his son; and his zeal to serve Lewis, and procure such interest as might eventually be of material benefit to him in his entrance on the world, had led him, too inconsiderately, to make himself responsible for a youth, whose morals and disposition he was perfectly unacquainted with.

His eyes now opened to the danger of such an important trust, as hastily and weakly committed to him, as prematurely and unadvisedly accepted by him,—there seemed but one step left for him to take, that might in some degree be a counter balance to the error he had been guilty of; which was to procure an honest,

worthy, sensible man to accompany them, who should correspond with him, and by a regular detail of their proceedings, enable him to judge whether the levity of young Douglas proceeded from an exuberance of animal spirits, that might be corrected by the steady, sensible, and unaffected good humour of Lewis, or from a real depravity of heart, and a total disregard to morals.

In the first instance there was a hope of mutual advantage by the cultivation of friendship between them—each assimilating a little to the disposition of the other; but if Douglas was really dissipated and incorrigible, he should then recal his young protegeé, and advise Mr. Douglas to do the same by his son. Lewis had silently attended for the result of the good man's contemplations, which, however, when communicated, did not exactly accord with his wishes, or his judgment; but he knew so well that the worthy father had his

his real interest much at heart, that though it was with a repugnance he could not conquer, that he consented to accompany Mr. Douglas, he thought it was an unquestionable duty in him to be guided solely by the advice of his friend.

To leave that spot which contained Hermine, to know she was now without a friend or companion to enliven her solitary hours—exposed to the artful duplicity of that Sister Marie, (whom he cordially hated) and not a single being to whom she could look up to with confidence for assistance but Father Francis, who was also old, and but little capable of any active services, should such be necessary to rescue her from the selfish plans of the nuns,—these were the considerations that wrung the heart of Lewis, and rendered him miserable in being compelled to leave the forest.

At length he gathered courage to explain every thing he felt on this interesting subject to his friend and benefactor. "I have already assured you," said the father, "that I will be a tender friend to that unfortunate orphan whilst I live; and should it please our Almighty Father to call me from this state of probation before she is at liberty to decide on her future plans, I will not leave her without a friend. Father Anselem is a pious, good man, truly kind and benevolent. He has often officiated for me when I have been ill, and will unquestionably succeed me when I die—he is much younger, and in good health. I will interest him for her, and engage his word to protect that amiable young woman:—Nor, whilst I live, shall you be unacquainted with every circumstance that is attached to her. You know the repository where I have placed what she committed to my trust; she knows it also—the secret will rest between you.—Fear not for her, there

there is a Father to the Fatherless who will never desert her; and my zeal to serve her you may rely upon."

The father had scarcely given this assurance to calm the anxiety of Lewis, when Douglas came in. He resolved to tell his own story and in his own manner. "You have had a long walk, my son," said Father Francis, "you may lose yourself in the forest, if you ramble too far alone."

"Lose myself! why it is next to a miracle that I am returned to you now sound in wind and limb. Your lady nuns are some of them worse than tigers—faith, I expected the old porteress would have flown upon me tooth and nail, and scrached me into fritters."

"What is it you say, son,—have *you* been at the convent?"

"Certainly I have—could any thing be more natural, and proper, than for me to pay my devoirs to the friend of my sister, to enquire after her health?—I must have been of the tiger breed myself, not to have done it. Well, I civilly asked old surly Cerberus——" "Cerberus," repeated the father, knitting his brow.—"Aye, a very proper name for the porteress of a convent, Father. So I *politely* asked her to let Mademoiselle Hermine know I wished to see her.—Never in your life did you behold such a vixen—*she* a pious nun!—why I would pit her against our English ladies at Billingsgate. I was quite shocked at her vociferation and abuse, and besought her calmly to moderate the *fire* of her zeal, and not terrify the convent ladies with apprehensions of being assaulted and carried off. What did this mad, perverse, rageful creature do, but ran screaming into the house, that a man was breaking into the convent, and

was

was going to set it on fire and take off all the nuns!

"Possibly she might add there was a host of men; for in a moment, in burst a host of women, eager I suppose, to face the danger,—when, poor souls, they were all cruelly disappointed by seeing only a harmless, beardless stripling, who told his simple tale, and added, that he lived with Father Francis.

"Their fright at first, and their still greater shock, at seeing only one youth, instead of fifty, rendered them dull of comprehension; but the abbess, who seemed to be the only reasonable woman, was *perfectly satisfied*, and carried off her sorrowful virgins presently. By the bye, I never saw such a parcel of frights;—there were a few young ones, but not one worth crossing the forest to see. Well, I then addressed myself to Mam'selle Hermine, who is as proud,

proud, and as stately, as if she had been born an empress, and took upon herself to lecture *me* of all things, who had suffered almost martyrdom out of pure civility to ask of *her health*.—Catch me at doing such acts of supererogation at a convent again, and I'll be content to be made a sop for old Cerberus, or a martyr to the eleven thousand virgins of St. Ursula.

"So I explained my errand with all the friendliness imaginable, though hang me if I could help laughing at the recollection of the foregoing scene;—this I suppose offended Mam'selle demure, for with a very queer sort of a speech, which implied that she did not care a sixpence for the brother of Fidelia, she politely turned her back upon me.

"This is convent civility, but if ever she has the happiness of seeing the tip of my nose again, she shall embrace me with

with both arms, I can tell her that; and it may be my turn then to turn heel upon her."

Father Francis and Lewis had listened with various emotions to this unaccountable jumble; the father scandalized that there should have been any uproar at the convent, from whatever cause it might have arisen, and a little fearful that the English youth must have been too brusque in his manners, palliate it how he would.

Lewis was in agonies, convinced that he must have insulted Hermine, or the natural sweetness of her manners never could have incurred the censure Douglas had passed upon her conduct.—What then would she think of him, if he became a companion to this strange youth!—Whilst these unpleasant reflections crossed his mind, the father had given a mild lecture to Douglas, and laboured to convince him that he had violated decorum,

decorum, and the customs of a religious house, by his unseasonable visit, without a proper introduction.—Adding, that he would explain matters, and trusted his perfect ignorance of those customs and manners, would be accepted as an apology, and do away the evil impression they might otherwise imbibe to his disadvantage."

"As you please, father," answered he, carelessly, "as I have not the slightest intention to do them the honour of another visit, I am entirely indifferent what they think of me."

The good man was mortified; his heart reproached him for having unadvisedly taken charge of a youth, who at a period of life to be considered merely as a school boy, seemed to have arrived at opinions and habits, which even in a more adult age, would be reprehensible.—But he already perceived an obstinacy of disposition that would revolt

volt against *harsh methods*, he must be led, not driven; and still he would indulge a hope that the propriety of Lewis's conduct would incite him to example, and stimulate him to copy, what he could not choose but admire.

The following morning the father and Lewis went to the convent; the latter was indulged with a long conference with Hermine, who received him with visible pleasure, but very freely expressed her regrets, that he was to be the companion of one so volatile, and she feared, unprincipled.

He then heard the whole of his behaviour as reported by Sister Agnes, and in a great measure confirmed by himself to Hermine; and his indignation against him was proportioned to the admiration he felt at her just reprehension.

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She appeared to him a divinity who ought to be approached with veneration and respect, and as such, placed at an immeasurable distance from his hopes; and therefore it became him to crush his too presumptuous wishes, and be sufficiently gratified in being allowed the honour to regard her as a benevolent friend.

She assured him she should ever be deeply interested in his welfare and happiness; hoped he would write *very often* to the worthy father, that she might hear, thro' him, of his success—which she had little doubt of, if he persevered in the line of rectitude that seemed to be the ruling principle of his conduct.

Proud and delighted by her favourable opinion of his heart and morals, Lewis firmly resolved to be strictly scrupulous in his conduct and manners, to justify *her judgment*, and deserve the confidence she honoured

honoured him with. And here we may observe the general good effects that are produced on the juvenile mind, if early attached to valuable characters, and desirous of obtaining their love and esteem.—Such a prepossession acts like a talisman to guard the heart, and correct the impetuosity of youthful passions, when the indulgence of such must inevitably deprive them of that esteem so highly prized, and so truly invaluable.—Such a check is worth a thousand lessons, for it speaks directly to the heart.

Lewis quitted Hermine not without a sigh, but with emotions of delight that repelled his secret regrets, and bade him exult in the esteem of such a being as this excellent young woman. He returned with Father Francis, who had heard of his English pupil's strange behaviour with much dissatisfaction; tho' softened in the relation by the Lady Abbess, who had not forgotten his compliments to her.—But the nuns having

having no such qualifiers to deprecate their anger, spake of him as he deserved, nothing to extenuate, but a little addition, rather on the score of malice.

He did not fail to read a lesson to Lewis, on those juvenile follies which though not coming under the head of vices, yet depraved the mind and understanding by a departure from truth, the head and foundation of every moral virtue.

"It was useless," he said, "to regret the task he had unwarily drawn upon himself; but Lewis had much in his power by the propriety of his conduct, not only to console him, but draw a glorious reputation to himself, by exciting this very forward, and ill-educated boy to a reform in his manners, by teaching him to love virtue, and good order. When he beheld an example worthy of his imitation, in a youth lowly born, without any advantages from fortune

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or friends, who had by the gift of Providence, that sense of moral virtue, that intuitive knowledge of right and wrong, "that to be good, is to be happy," and a sweetness of disposition that made the observance of every impressive duty a source of pleasure to himself and others.

"When," continued the good man, "he observes that virtue looks lovely in a homely garb, and acquires respect from its intrinsic worth, which vice can never obtain, though gilded by birth and fortune; but from mean parasites, from the ephemera of the day, who bask in the sunshine of prosperity, and will as readily fly from the wintry storm of poverty, although it assails their once dearest friends.

"A little reflection, a small experience in the school of the great world, will teach this giddy youth to respect and admire you; and then pride of birth will stimulate him to

to aim at soaring beyond the lowly virtues that command his admiration."

Lewis listened to the good father with respectful attention, but Lewis was not the all-perfect being the benevolent priest supposed him to be. He had his passions and his prejudices; the latter were strong against Douglas, and he considered the task imposed upon him as the test of his obligations to Father Francis, and no small sacrifice to the imperious demands of gratitude, for favours immeasurably great.

He was silent, professions he thought superfluous; and he could not express satisfaction he did not feel, nor indulge hopes, that humility on his own part, and his little confidence in the morals of young Douglas, taught him to believe would be as fruitless, as presumptuous.

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It was full three weeks from this period before the arrival of a long expected gentleman; for as such he had been born and educated, tho' as a younger son of a family fallen into decay, he had been compelled by a succession of evil accidents and repeated misfortunes, to accept a more humble line of life than was adapted to his spirit or abilities.

But a series of disappointments had blunted the energy of his feelings, and subdued him to a passive bearance of his ill-starred destiny. This unfortunate man had been recommended to Father Francis, when he had made application for a worthy intelligent man of some abilities, who had made the tour of the Continent, and was not above being useful in every capacity.

Such orders of men were not scarce in France, though the Germans retained a sort of dignity under the most humble fortunes,

fortunes, that revolted against those little services a French Abbé is always ready to perform when it suits his convenience. But when Monsieur De Preux presented his credentials to the good priest, he found the person before him described as very superior to his situation, though ill-fortune, and good sense, had taught him to submit to circumstances he could not controul. Such a man was precisely what the father wished for; and after a short desultory conversation, he introduced him to young Douglas and Lewis as their travelling companion—an intelligent man, from whose experience they must derive information, and from whose *voluntary services* Mr. Douglas would be spared the expence of a valet de place.

Douglas inherited all the pride, the insolence in prosperity, the artificial covering of vice, under a gaiety of heart, which formed the basis of his mother's character; added

added to which, he had a thoughtless good humour, and a constant desire of seeking his own ease and convenience, let the sacrifice for obtaining it cost him what it would—and this disposition was the counter-part of his father's.

Initiated so early into life by a vain, foolish mother, and indulged in all his caprices by the sufferance of a weak father, this youth was already an adept in the art of duplicity, and saw at once, how necessary it would be for his comforts to make a friend of De Preux; and by an affected effect of generosity, and consideration of his birth and misfortunes, to make him literally his humble friend, and receive his services more as acts of friendship, than such as he had a right to exact. Thus he united the valet and companion in one person, and seemed to forget the former when addressing the latter.

This

This condescension had a wonderful effect upon Monsieur De Preux. Like most of his countrymen, his feelings were all alive—poverty had depressed his spirits, but not chilled his heart; that sensibility and vivacity which had in early days been natural to him, had long lain dormant, but were not extinguished—and upon the unexpected kindness of the artful Douglas, they blazed forth into an *apparent* enthusiastic fit of rapturous gratitude, that was equally gratifying to the pride, as to the concealed views of that designing youth.

Father Francis, literally taking things as they appeared to be, congratulated himself on his good fortune in obtaining such a treasure as De Preux, and was not less delighted to observe in young Douglas such traits of benevolence, and consideration for an unfortunate gentleman, as marked a good heart under all his levities, which, after all, might be only the exuberance

berance of uncontrouled animal spirits, and would soon be directed into a more even channel by the skill and care of his companions.

Lewis, who really felt respect and concern for the unfortunate gentleman, from his own feelings readily gave Douglas full credit for the propriety of his behaviour;—and sensible of his humble birth, and inferiority of education and manners to Monsieur De Preux, could not suffer the other should degrade himself by any such mean offices, as hitherto had not been permitted *in him* to exert. On this head he spake to his worthy benefactor; but the father had already decided on his plan, which was to give Lewis every possible advantage in his situation that should bring him forward as a preceptor, and therefore would not abate one tittle in the civility he had exacted from Douglas towards his young companion.

"He has been taught," said he, "to value himself but too much on the adventitious advantages of birth and fortune; I wish to teach him, that merit, good qualities of the heart and mind, independent of every other consideration, are entitled to as much, if not more respect from its intrinsic worth, than those casual claims which men adduce from their ancestors, or the acquirement of riches. And let this consideration, young man, have its due weight with you—you must literally seek your own fortune, and only a perseverance in virtue and integrity, can lead you to reputation, respect, and prosperity."

"But, my good father," said Lewis, "though deeply impressed with a sense of your kindness to me, has not Monsieur still superior claims, since, added to his former expectations from the rank he was born in, he has, no doubt, in a much greater degree, all those qualities of the heart

heart and understanding you so greatly over-rate in me, or certainly he would never have been recommended to you."

"Your observation is just and natural," replied the father, "and it comes with propriety from you; but allow me to be the best judge in these matters, and do you pursue the path I have chalked out for you, at the same time giving to Mr. De Preux that respect his years, his merit, and his birth may entitle him to.—Only remember, that in all cases, the nobility of the mind, and the goodness of the heart, must ever claim a pre-eminence in the eyes of God, and in the estimation of worthy characters, to all the boasted advantages of birth and fortune."

After this conversation Lewis did not renew the subject; but his feelings had an obvious effect on his conduct, and De Preux could not but be pleased with the whole

tenor of his behaviour. They passed near a fortnight at the monastery preparing for their journey, and regulating their plan, during which period, letters arrived from England—from Mr. Douglas to his son and the priest, and from Fidelia to her friend.

From the latter we shall make some extracts. She gave a very brief account of her journey, though she largely and gratefully expatiated on the kindness of her father. She then proceeds,

"The indulgent tenderness of one parent tended in a great measure to lessen the terrors, that in spite of every effort of reason and natural affection, spread over my heart when preparing for an interview with my mother. I asked a hundred questions relative to the reception I might expect; and freely confessed, I dreaded more than I wished an introduction to a parent

parent who had never loved me. My father said every thing kind to give me courage and confidence; but when we arrived in London, when the carriage stopped at the door of a very noble looking house, my spirits sank at once, I threw myself into my father's arms, and burst into tears.

"He soothed and consoled me;—he led me into his library, my heart was too full then to remark the grandeur which might be supposed to strike *one* unaccustomed to any thing like splendour. He ordered refreshments, and when he saw the tumult of my agitations were subsided, he rose to prepare my mother to receive me.—I should have told you, the servants had said, on his enquiry, that she was thought to be much better.

"He left me to my own sad reflections, they were painful in the extreme.—My father was absent, I thought, an immeasurable

length of time; this mother perhaps already repented sending for me—I trembled with apprehension.—My father appeared, I fancied he looked ruffled, his countenance clouded, but his words and manner were exceedingly tender.

"Come, my dear Fidelia, let me present you to your poor mother;—she is a great sufferer. Allow for the weakness of her mind and body;—be not discouraged.—She is conscious she has not treated you kindly, and proud hearts feel hurt when conviction strikes them in the object before them;—allow for all this, *my child*, and you will very soon have nothing to complain of."

"Do you suppose this preamble tended to quiet my terrors? Alas, no! I could not speak, and with difficulty sustained my sinking frame. Oh, what a scene ensued! Scarcely can I bring myself to retrace the *outlines*,

outlines, even to you, my dearest friend;—the recurrence shakes my very soul, and I must hasten over it as lightly as I can.

"I saw nothing of the elegance of a most superb apartment,—I saw only a lady at the upper end of it, reclining on a sofa.—We advanced with quick steps, and my trembling knees no longer able to support me, I sank on them, before her, just as she moved her head, and uttering a faint shriek, covered her face with her hand.

"My love," said my father, "will you not welcome poor Fidelia?" "Take her, take her away!" exclaimed she, "I cannot bear to look at her." "Oh, my mother," was all I could utter. "Dearest Maria," again urged my father, "receive your child, look at her, see the exact image of what you were,—she——"

"He was proceeding, when dropping her hand, with looks the most terrific, and the voice of a fury, she exclaimed, "Of what I were; what then, you have brought this creature to insult me,—to usurp my rights,—to tell me what I have been,—what I am now!—In the bloom of youth, lost to all the enjoyments of life;—and shall she be received into the world to be admired and caressed, to blast her mother's fame, to sink me into infamy, and teach my very servants to despise me! No, I cannot,—will not bear it;—sooner will I murder her, you, and myself."

"I heard no more, but dropt senseless on the floor; of what passed further between her and my father I am ignorant. I can only judge from consequences, that the state I was in, and her unjust ungovernable fury, rouzed his indignation, and caused him to exert unusual spirit;—it likewise encreased

creased his tenderness and affection for the unhappy being so cruelly reprobated..

" When I returned to life, I found myself on a bed; my father and a gentleman standing by the side of it, and a decent looking young woman, with salts in her hand, leaning over me.

" My dear Fidelia," said my kind father, pressing my hand, " thank Heaven you are recovered once more!" " Indeed I almost began to despair," added the other, " the young lady had better be undressed and laid in bed; kept extremely quiet, for her nerves are terribly shattered, and I will send some proper medicines."

" He withdrew, my father followed him, whilst the young woman, whom he called Kitty, rang for another to assist me into bed.—I then found I had been let blood, and I was told I had been in successive

faintings for more than an hour. I was passive and silent, and when they withdrew, on my father's re-entrance, I was too weak to speak, and could only hold out my hand. He took it, kissed, and shed tears over it, which moved me exceedingly.

" Compose yourself, my dear child, you shall no more be exposed to such cruel treatment from an unjust capricious woman, I blush to call your mother. Her behaviour to you has effectually cured me of the blind, weak, and very culpable conduct, which has for years made me her slave; and to preserve peace, I have sacrificed my happiness, my honour, and my conscience. But the delusion is over—her injustice shall be confined to her own apartment,—nor shall you ever see her more, unless at her own request, and with sentiments totally changed in your favour.

" Adieu,

"Adieu, my dear, endeavour to rest;—Kitty is your attendant, I will give orders in the family, that your commands are to be obeyed in this house, equally with mine." In short, my dear Hermine, 'tis impossible for me to do justice to all he said or has done for me.

"But alas! I am truly wretched!—I have now been here a week,—Mrs. Douglas, for I cannot call her mother, will not admit me to her presence, she raves against me incessantly,—and cruel as the idea is, it is my unfortunate resemblance to herself, the few personal charms nature has given to me, which have excited her jealousy, and absolute detestation—for till she saw me, she had not absolutely renounced me.

"The moment my father entered to announce my arrival, her first question was, "is she handsome?" Poor man! misinterpreting her sentiments, his reply was "beautiful

tiful as an angel!" He saw immediately he was wrong, and tried to soften down the ill-timed praise, by adding, "Perhaps 'tis because I was struck with a resemblance to you, that makes me think so."

"I see, I see my folly," said she, "you have conspired against my peace, taken advantage of my weakness in a luckless hour. Oh, had my poor aunt been alive, this never would have happened;—but since it must be so, bring her in, and let me judge for myself."

"My father was much hurt, as I observed by his countenance.—What followed I have related; and I am sure you will not accuse me of vanity, but rather lament, as I do, my ill-starred destiny, that my mother declares, "She hates me because I am beautiful."

"And

"And can I call such a woman a mother? Gracious Heaven! What an unhappy being is your poor Fidelia.—My father cannot console me; I have already caused an estrangement between them, for he absolutely doats on me. I decline all his presents,—I wish to remain unknown; I send daily submissive messages to Mrs. Douglas.—I wish most ardently for *her sake*, more than for my own, to be received as a daughter—for an unnatural mother is a being I shudder to name.

"How presumptuous are weak mortals in their desires, how often punished by the grant of them! Since I have known you, most respected and beloved Hermine, how many hours have I passed in bitter regrets, at the imperious necessity, which I believed inevitable, that was soon to close all worldly views, and bury me in a convent for life! How did I lament my cruel destiny, that must place an insurmountable barrier between

our future intimacy whenever you left the convent.

"Alas! this world I regretted to be shut out from, offers me nothing but sorrow, disappointment, and disgust! Oh, that I were again with you listening to your charming voice,—a witness to your patient sufferance of the disagreeables you endure;—of your energy of mind, that enables you to look forward to expecting uncertain events, on which are dependant your happiness, or misery!—with a dignified composure, which is as astonishing as it is admirable.

"Oh, my friend, I again repeat, would to Heaven, I were by your side, in your poor little apartment, rather than here surrounded by splendid furniture,—a luxurious table,—numerous attendants,—a tender father;—but all, all embittered by a cruel mother!—by the painful reflection that *I* have

have alienated those hearts that ought never to have been severed, and that the attachment of a father is a mortal wound to the peace of a mother, who hates her unoffending child!

"Gracious Heaven! I can pursue this subject no farther.—Write, console, advise me, my beloved friend! Oh, that you would but come to me. Friendship, humanity, circumstances the most important, under which I labour, without courage to act, or fortitude to bear; have these no weight to counterbalance your motives for residing in the convent? Pity your poor Fidelia, who will love you as long as she lives;—who owes every thing to your society.—But the weakness of her mind,—the feebleness of her powers, preclude even the shadow of a possibility, that she can acquire your strength of character, without your precepts, your example before her, to stimulate her efforts, and teach her to conduct herself with

with propriety, through the thorny labyrinth in which she is entangled.

" Remember me to the good Sister Therese, bid her pray for me;—of your prayers I rest assured.—Say for me what you think proper to the abbess and community,—do not forget my duty and affection to Father Francis. My brother and young Lewis are no doubt on their journey, but my father writes. Adieu, adieu, my beloved friend, hasten to comfort and support your

FIDELIA."

This melancholy letter gave to Hermine the sincerest concern and compassion for the unfortunate writer, and the highest indignation and disgust to a character so unnatural, so truly despicable as Mrs. Douglas. A woman, whose vanity had, like the rod of Aaron, swallowed up all other considerations, every amiable trait that distinguishes the female character,

into.

into the sole point of self-gratification—the contemptible folly of being admired for her beauty, distinguished by a croud of lounging adorers—the detestable ambition of being envied by her own sex, by encouraging the adulations of married men, and giving mortal stabs to the peace and happiness of many amiable women.

Such was the woman who had abandoned an innocent unfortunate child without remorse or consideration. Years had winged their flight over her head, teeming with pleasure, pride, and exultation—enjoying the present, careless of the future. —Thoughtless woman!—She was stopped in her full career of delights. A calamity so dreadful as the palsy, would have excited the tenderest commiseration, the kindest attentions towards any other woman—but whose peace, whose happiness, or misfortunes, had Mrs. Douglas respected?—No one's—she was left there-

fore

fore to sickness and solitude. She could no longer contribute her quota towards the amusement of others, and the votaries of pleasure fled from the object with disgust, whom they had a few months before courted and idolized.

Such are the fashionable friendships in the great world!—A few humble visitors, who had private selfish views to pay them for the sacrifice of their time, now and then dropped in; but to a woman whose whole soul had been absorbed in vanity and love of admiration, no consolation could be derived from company she despised. Thus humbled by disease and neglect, her temper grew every day more irritable and capricious. In a temporary fit of remorse she had consented to receive Fidelia; but self-consideration had some share in giving a reluctant permission for her emancipation from the convent, that she might always have a companion to divert

vert her ennui by a number of convent anecdotes.

But very soon after Mr. Douglas left England, she had been persuaded to try electricity, to which before she had constantly objected, and had really found much benefit by it—returning warmth had reanimated her side, she could use her hand, and though not yet able to stand, had every prospect that time and perseverance might wholly restore her, though still extremely languid and relaxed. The return of hope, had brought with it a taste for all former pleasures; and that dormant vanity nothing could extinguish, returned in its full force, and looked forward once more to abundant gratification.

She now bitterly repented sending for Fidelia; and no less deplored the death of her aunt, whose turn for contrivance would some how have ridden her of an object she

she so much dreaded. Her vexation on this score, had again hurt her nerves; and the day preceding Fidelia's arrival, she had been sensible of an encreased weakness in her limbs—of course, her disposition was not in the most pleasing train when Mr. Douglas returned with the cause of all her vexation.

When she asked if she was handsome, it was with an ardent hope of hearing a negative. "Beautiful as an angel!" exclaimed the exulting father. — It was enough, the sound of beauty in another, and that other the object of her eternal terror and dislike, was a death-stroke; and when urged by him, and impelled by curiosity, she admitted of an interview, the lovely interesting countenance of Fidelia smote her to the heart,—but it engendered all the bad passions, and the reproaches of conscience served only to encrease her detestation, envy, and malice. For the sake

of

of human nature, we will hope there are not many such monsters as this unnatural mother;—but *such things have been*, and are most horrid.

Whether it were the death of that aunt whose unbounded influence and authority had extended over Mr. Douglas as well as over his household—whether being emancipated from a yoke always burthensome, but which he wanted resolution to shake off—or the confinement of his wife, and her temporary fits of remorse in the hours of pain and despair—or whether the last letters of Fidelia, combining with other circumstances, had rouzed him into a painful consideration of the cruel injustice shewn towards an innocent child—it is certain a wonderful revolution passed in his mind; and he had determined to save her from her intended destiny, and was meditating on the means, when, fortunately, a few words escaped from Mrs. Douglas,

Douglas, which he instantly laid hold of, and gave her no time to recal.

Her cruel reception of this ill-treated girl, her illness, and the violence of his wife, opened his eyes, and strengthened the mind of the too long submissive husband, and unjust father.—Remorse and tenderness assailed his heart most forcibly; and from that hour he became a decided character — determined to think and act for himself, independent of a haughty bad woman, whose depravity of heart he now beheld in its worst colours.

With these sentiments, and a consequent total change in the arrangements of his family government, we shall leave Mr. Douglas, and return to the Forest of Ardenne, where every preparation was completed for the travelling trio.

The

The English youth, highly pleased with Monsieur De Preux, and eager to begin his expected pleasurable tour, — Lewis, with hopes less sanguine, felt himself an insulated being, without fortune, connexions, or friends, but those he was to leave, and whom it was possible he might never see again. Father Francis was old, and seemed to hold his life on a very uncertain tenure; and Hermine, the adored Hermine, whose future destiny was unknown to herself, might be impelled by circumstances to visit a different part of the globe from what he inhabited; and it was but too probable, whatever fate attended her, she would be in a station far above him—and by subsequent events, and new connexions, might soon lose all remembrance of a youth, whose humble birth and future views placed an immeasurable distance between them.

Father

Father Francis accompanied him on his farewel visit—it was painful to all parties. Hermine was extremely moved, and superior to disguise, she frankly acknowledged her regrets, and protested she should be ever deeply interested in every occurrence of his life, both from esteem and gratitude; and should it be her fate to leave the convent before he had an opportunity of returning to visit his benefactor, from the family of Mr. Douglas he would most probably hear the destination of a friend, that in no circumstances whatever would cease to recollect, that to him, and his family, she was indebted for consolation and assistance in the most afflictive period of her life.

Transported by these kind assurances, Lewis recovered from the oppressive sorrow that had sank his spirits, and taken from him the power of articulation. His eyes brightened, the colour returned to his cheeks,

cheeks, and when he kissed her hand, he expressed such animated gratitude for her invaluable kindness, as threw Hermine into the confusion and silence she had banished from him.

The good priest put an end to an interview he saw gave pain to both parties; and Hermine admitted of a visit from Mr. Douglas, to assure the brother of Fidelia of her best wishes for his health and happiness. "She is an angelic creature," said he, "that's the truth, but I prefer a pretty lively girl, to your *dignified* beauties;—she looks to *command respect*, as well as admiration. I like those good-humoured things that say, *You may love me if you will.*"

No answer was returned, and he might have seen his gaiety was by no means correspondent to the feelings of his companions. But the thoughtless youth was

very little concerned on that head, he had other schemes in view, that promised him much subsequent pleasure.

The day of so much importance, though very differently appreciated, was ushered in by the most delightful sunshine that ever shed its radiant beams over the earth. The young and sanguine Douglas hailed it as a happy omen, teeming with future joys. Lewis beheld it as the last parting ray of happiness he left behind him. So differently do the same objects take their complexion from the state of our minds!

It is not our intention to write a tour through countries already so excellently described; or follow our travellers geographically into the different states they literally passed through — where they merely enquired into the local curiosities, customs and manners of each city and town, without personally investigating the truth

truth or fallacy of their information.—Florence was the first grand object they had in view for a residence. Father Francis had a brother there, confessor to a noble family; and it so happened, that Monsieur De Preux had twice passed some months in that beautiful city, and had, he said, some very respectable acquaintance there.

The good old father, in full confidence of De Preux' integrity, from the recommendation he brought with him, and assured of the virtue and morals of Lewis, felt less reluctance at the separation than he expected; and in the hope of the youth's deriving both knowledge and profit from a plan he had been anxious to promote, saw them depart without betraying any of those lively emotions that agitated Lewis on leaving, perhaps for ever, the only friend he had in the world, who could, or would serve him.

CHAP. XV.

OUR travellers, after a long and very pleasant journey through Lorraine and Franche Comte, crossed into Switzerland, purposely to pass a few days at Bern and Lausanne.—It was from the last mentioned place that Douglas and Lewis wrote to their respective friends. As nothing particular occurred either during their residence there, or in their tour through Italy, until they reached Florence, where it was intended they should be stationary some months, we shall omit all the sublime

lime and beautiful images, romantic and flowery descriptions of cities, towns, mountains, and vallies, grey-eyed morns, and setting suns, which former travellers have already sufficiently expatiated on, and are too generally known, to excite curiosity, or convey pleasure to our readers from our feeble pen. We shall therefore set down our tourists safely at Florence, where they congratulated each other on what they had seen, and on the pleasing prospect of still more enchanting views they had yet to see.

Every one had been so entirely engaged by the novelty of the scenes they had rapidly passed through, that no opportunities occurred for investigating characters. — Except in Bern and Lausanne, they had not stopped two days in any city or town; a ramble round the buildings, a cursory view of the curiosities, and a few questions of indifferently informed people, relative to the local customs and manners of each

place, very well satisfied young Douglas, who, regarding Monsieur De Preux as an oracle, trusted his judgment implicitly to his direction.

And here we should notice, that Mr. Douglas having made his son a very liberal allowance, and also a genteel salary to Lewis, with letters of credit that were a passport through every town and country, when they arrived at Bern, young Frederic, from his strong attachment to De Preux, received him entirely as a companion, and hired an attendant valet to supersede him in those subordinate offices he had undertaken to perform. To this arrangement Lewis was perfectly acquiescent, as it had always given him pain to see the degradation of a gentleman.

A celebrated author, in describing the manners of the French, observes,—"they are lively and insinuating—flattery and dissimulation

dissimulation costs them nothing, on the contrary they think it the very essence of politeness:—they submit to adversity with a good grace, but they are intolerably proud and insolent in prosperity."

All indiscriminate or general censure, on any nation is illiberal; but there are undoubtedly too many instances that justify the severity of this observation on individuals. This many families have known, since the reception of French emigrants into their houses as preceptors and governesses; whilst hundreds of amiable unfortunates in their own country, have been dismissed, and thrown into that abject poverty, from which such families have thought it meritorious to preserve the emigrants—without reflecting, that government had liberally stepped forth to assist *them*, and that great numbers of well-born, well-educated persons of both sexes, perhaps orphans and friendless, deprived of

relations, friends, and fortune, by that very national calamity (a fatal, destructive war) which brought the unfortunate emigrants under our protection. *Hundreds*, to speak within bounds, of such, are now wanting bread, countenance, and support; and, without hope of relief, are possibly driven into vice and infamy by indigence and neglect, because superseded in those situations by foreigners on which they depended for existence. This is a melancholy but true representation of circumstances, that calls loudly upon benevolence and national consideration to remedy.

But to return to a character that unhappily exemplified the observations of the author, whose general censure we did not approve.—Monsieur De Preux, we have said, was well born, and in early life, had better expectations than the humble line in which he had passed some years. He had quick parts, natural vivacity, and in every situation

tion was entitled to observe a kind of pride, —a decent dignity, which is always due to ourselves, under every misfortune.

Unhappily, De Preux, in submitting to bear his degradation, had forgotten that proper pride which preserves self-respect; and anxious to conciliate good-will, and favourable indulgencies, had suffered his mind to be debased by his circumstances. He could assume any shape, and could penetrate the characters of youth with wonderful facility.

This knowledge gained, he quickly formed his plans on the superstructure of another person's weakness, and by the most insinuating manners acquired an ascendancy that secured favour, and had procured him protection and recommendation. This gentleman, agreeably surprised and flattered by the sudden prepossession in his favour evinced by Frederic Douglas, pursued his

usual modes of conciliating attention and regard from those he served with more than common avidity. The character of this youth he saw was to be fixed; he was wild, dissipated, thoughtless, and vain,—accustomed to uncontrouled indulgence, with an easiness of disposition that in early youth might have been taught to bend at the shrine of virtue, with the same facility as he had pursued vice and dissipation, encouraged by the example of an imprudent mother.

He had no fixed principles, but little judgment, and less decision.—A sensible, intelligent, mild preceptor, might, without a doubt, have acquired the same influence over his mind, as the unworthy Abbé had done; and his character, in good hands, would have had the stamp of virtue.—But he had been left to plunge into a career of irregularities at an age when he ought to have been at school, and all that was required

quired of him was to conceal his follies from the eye of his father,—to pay a respect he did not feel, to the Abbé,—and suffer him to establish his character in whatever light he pleased, with his weak and careless employer.

De Preux was well convinced he could shape this youth into what form he pleased; but it was not so with Lewis Berthier.—There was a solidity in his manners,—an energy of character in all he said or did, that denoted a reflecting mind capable of thinking and acting for itself. This young man whose humble birth he disdained; —who he considered in the light of a dependant on Frederic Douglas, and who any more than himself, had any prospects of support, but what he must derive from his own exertions, under all these disadvantages, to which was added a jealousy of the influence he might obtain over Douglas, if not counteracted by his manœuvres, in

in spite of himself, with all these causes of dislike, he could not help mingling respect and fear with contempt and hatred;—and to withdraw the confidence of his companion from one whose principles were so inimical to his own views, must be the first grand object to accomplish.

Lewis, ingenuous and unsuspicious, had not yet developed the character of De Preux. New to the world, its customs, and manners, he had observed nothing in his behaviour to lessen the respect, and humane consideration he felt for his birth and misfortunes.—He had but one line to pursue in his own conduct, to follow the dictates of an unadulterated heart, governed solely by an innate love of truth and integrity, and a wish to please his volatile companion.

As to Douglas, his first prepossession in favour of Lewis had considerably declined, since his intimacy with De Preux; and though

though he was still good humoured, and apparently kind, it was more from carelessness and habit, than from any settled esteem. With these dispositions they arrived at Florence; and De Preux who had been a resident there several months, very soon procured them proper accommodations in the house of a widow gentlewoman who had one son and two daughters.

No sooner were they settled, than De Preux introduced to Mr. Douglas the Count Benito, and Seignor Massini, "two young noblemen," he said, "who were distinguished for their politeness and urbanity to strangers, if they were men of fashion and character." They spoke French perfectly well, and understood English, but spoke it indifferently.—There was an air of fashion in their appearance, and of ease in their manners, that highly pleased Douglas; who, contrary to the usual reserve in Englishmen,

Englishmen, was presently extremely familiar, and highly loquacious.

Lewis, always in the back ground, after the first introduction, was merely an observer. The civility which the strangers shewed to De Preux puzzled him not a little. He had been recommended to Father Francis as an intelligent travelling *valet*, who having been well born, but unfortunate, had long been accustomed to that situation; but had superior manners to what was commonly met with in such.

It was true, Lewis knew but little of the world, indeed nothing but by books; yet he could not help thinking it strange that if he had been in Florence before, in a subordinate character, that he should now be familiar with noblemen. Still it might be his ignorance of the local customs of the place, and he continued to observe, without

out presuming to form an opinion of what he did not understand.

A proposal was made for the opera; Lewis ventured to hint, "Would it not be proper to avail themselves of the introduction Father Francis had given to them, before they went into public." This idea was scouted by all the party.—Seignor Massini gaily answered, "Any day would answer the purpose, and be a day too soon to be introduced to an old formal enthusiast, for such he supposed the friend of a Father Francis must be."

"He is a priest," said De Preux, "but I have no doubt a worthy man; and certainly Mr. Douglas should send his letter the following morning."

"With all my heart," Mr. Douglas carelessly answered, and Lewis accompanied them in silence for his thoughts were wandering

wandering back to the Ursuline Convent, in the Forest of Ardenne.

On entering the opera-house, astonishment seized on all his faculties. Every idea was put to flight by the fascination of the scenes before him,—the novelty and grandeur of which he had not the smallest conception of; and as he had not been accustomed to any artificial disguise of his feelings,—he broke out in such rapturous exclamations as highly diverted his companions, and would at once have informed the foreigners, he was not a man of the world, but a raw youth, perfectly a stranger to public places, had they not previously been acquainted with his birth and situation.

Lewis was all eye and ear to the entertainments on the stage, and attended but very little to his companions. Though Douglas was extremely delighted he was not so abstracted to the company, and the fascination

fascination of the beautiful women, who cast a thousand tender regards on the handsome English youths;—and before the entertainments concluded, the Count had introduced Douglas to a trio of ladies in the next box, who contrived to make himself understood through the medium of his new friends, and his indifferent French.

When the curtain dropped, Lewis recovered from his delirium of pleasure, and was rallied by his companions for his total neglect of them. He frankly pleaded guilty, and acknowledged that his senses had all been captivated by the enchantments of the evening, the nature of which he had not the most distant idea of;—and therefore might well be pardoned if he had forgot every thing but the gratification of his senses.

Douglas laughed aloud;—a shrug and a smile were the answers expressed by the foreigners,

reigners,—but the smiles caused in Lewis a momemtary confusion, for they were smiles of contempt.—The expression in their countenances pointed it to his feelings, and he felt abashed.—The good humour of Douglas restored him to himself.—" I envy you, Berthier," said he, " every thing you see will have the charm of novelty, and your pleasure must be superior to what any of us can feel.—For my part, I have been accustomed to the gay scenes of life, ever since I was out of my leading strings."

" But not to such scenes as the Italian opera," remarked the Count. " No, not so suberb and grand certainly, but a few minutes wears off the first impression of admiration, and then 'tis all the same routine of singing and dancing."

" You must speak more respectfully of our opera, if you expect to please our beautiful Signoras," returned the Count.

" Oh,

"Oh, I'll say whatever you please to dictate on that head," answered Douglas, "with such a temptation in view. But no wonder," bowing to one lady, who just then had fixed her black and sparkling eyes on Lewis,—"no wonder if I was insensible to the fascination of your charming opera, when an attraction so magnetic near to me, drew me irresistibly on one side, that it was with difficuly I could throw a glance on the scenes before me."

"Well come off," said Seignor Massini. The lady slowly withdrawing her eyes, from what *she thought a captivating object*, bowed graciously to Douglas, and permitted him to hand her to her carriage, accompanied by another lady something older. Exchanging a few compliments they returned, as the noblemen were to sup with Douglas.

Their

Their conversation naturally turned on the opera, and the ladies.—Lewis, in spite of his intended caution, was enthusiastic in his expressions of delight. Douglas highly extolled the house and entertainment; but he was still more rapturous in praise of the lady,—"She was the most beautiful creature in the universe!—But," said he, checking himself, and with a smile, "I forget my friend Berthier will condemn me for my attentions, for as I am not eighteen, he thinks my eyes should never wander from the page of instruction."

"And from whence can you derive better information than from the great book of nature?" asked the Count. "In the beautiful volume of a fine woman's face, you may contemplate Heaven's best work, and have a thousand sources of intuitive knowledge, of more use to your progress through the world, than the dry lessons of old Seneca, or the stoic Epictetus—strange fellows,

fellows, who practised self-denial to obtain a reputation that's perfectly obsolete now."

"Oh, hang all those fusty philosophers!" cried Douglas, "I know very little *about them*.—I want to know the world, and enjoy its pleasures—that's my system."

"Aye, and the *best* system too," joined in Seignor Massini, "but then 'tis only men of fortune that can share the delights of society; those who are dependants must indeed enter into a scholastic study, to fit them for their drudgery through life and obtain a maintenance."

The look that accompanied these words was so pointed at Lewis that he felt them to his soul, tho' otherwise the sarcasm might have lost its effect; but however lowly his birth, he had an innate dignity of mind that rose superior to insult, nor could he repress his feelings.

"It

"It is happy," said he, "when the mind of man is fitted to the station that Providence has allotted to him.—For instance, I was born and educated in poverty and obscurity,—I am now thrown upon the wide ocean of life, to procure my future maintenance; I am sensible of the many uncertain chances against me, but I hope I am prepared to meet them with fortitude and perseverance. I make no pretension,—assume no consequence, but whilst I have honour and integrity for my support, I will bear no insult, not even from a nobleman."

"You are warm,—you are too free and impetuous, Berthier!" exclaimed Douglas, "how has the observations of the Seignor affected you, that you should so rudely retort upon him?"

"Not rudely, sir," replied Lewis, his spirit a little cooled by having given vent to it, "not rudely, I hope, I meant merely to prove

prove that I was not ignorant of my situation, nor insensible to pointed reflections. I trust I shall always know myself, and have a proper respect for birth and fortune, —but when I do not provoke or deserve contempt, I shall also remember I have a reputation to support."

"What is all this cursed dull stuff about?" cried the Count, "I shall be devoured by the spleen in ten minutes.—Come, come, if we must not talk of the women, let's have cards." "With all my heart," returned Douglas, "I have not seen the four aces since I left London;—but while they are coming I must tell you a droll frolic of mine at the convent in the forest of Ardenne."

"I feel my head a little disordered," said Lewis, "by the entertainments of the opera, and, as I know nothing of cards, if you have no objection I will retire." "You are

are your own master, dear Lewis," returned Douglas, in a kind tone, "use no ceremony, pray."—With this permission he took leave of the company and withdrew.

His absence was a general relief, for this low-born youth was a check upon their conversation, and an observer upon their actions, which they well knew would not stand the test of examination.—So true it is, that vice both hates and fears virtue; nor is there any conscience so callous but what must sometimes feel the inward monitor that awes them into shame before the man of integrity.

Cards were soon brought, the Count and Douglas were partners against the Seignor and Monsieur De Preux; they played cassino till five in the morning, with different success, but fortune at length declared in favour of the former, who won about thirty pounds. The Seignor discharged his debt on

on the spot, De Preux produced his purse, which, *a little* to the surprise of Douglas, seemed to be very well filled. He would have declined the money;—"Excuse me, sir," said De Preux, "though I have been unfortunate, I am neither mean in my principles, nor so low in pocket but that I always pay my card debts."

"Fortune has hitherto dealt very unjustly with poor De Preux," said the Count, "but Massini and myself are determined he shall henceforth assume and support the rank he is entitled to hold in society;—we have ordered a deed to be prepared that shall secure to him a small independence, and the gifts of friendship the most scrupulous man may accept without any degradation to his honour."

"I am so entirely of your opinion," said the credulous Douglas, "that I hope you will allow me to participate in the pleasure

of serving a worthy gentleman to the best of my abilities. As I am young, my father has stinted my allowance to eight hundred a year."

"Well, well," said the Count, "merely to gratify your generous feelings, you shall settle one hundred on him,—not a shilling more,—we shall make it up five hundred; and my dear De Preux, I now congratulate you on the comforts of a small independence, which you shall enjoy to-morrow."

De Preux affected much self-denial,—wished to decline such favours, particularly from Mr. Douglas, since their recent acquaintance, and the degrading light in which he was first introduced, placed him in such a point of view, as could have no claims yet, even to be considered as a friend.

The

us,—we may stumble on the nobleman,—I think I should remember the name were I to hear it."

"I really should not, I believe," returned Lewis, "at present I have not the most distant idea of it; and am really very much concerned."

"So am not I," rejoined his companion, "we shall have the introduction quite soon enough, I dare say."

Several days had now passed away in a routine of amusements that delighted Douglas,—but after the novelty was over, began to fatigue and disgust Lewis,—he ventured one morning to ask, "If no time was to be devoted to study." "*You* may devote your *whole time* to it, if you please," returned the gay youth, "but I have a great aversion to every thing that hurts my eyes, and sours my temper; so I shall

throw study to the dogs,—I'll have none of it, as the poet says."

"I understood," said Lewis, gravely, "that we were to study together, and improve each other;—if that is not to be, of what use am I in attending upon you?"

"Use! why you follow in my suite,—you are my companion."

"A very unprofitable one, I am sure, if it is merely to follow you to public spectacles.—I cannot think myself entitled to a salary for that purpose only."

"Pry'thee don't be so fastidious;—my father allows you a tolerably decent stipend,—spend it, and be thankful. What the devil have you to answer for respecting my conduct, or the manner in which you dispose of your own money?—Do pray, "gentle youth," recollect you are

are not now in the Forest of Ardenne; —you are become a member of society, and if you design to make your way in the world, you must do what all wise people are obliged to do,—comply with the customs and manners of the people you are with."

"But if I have neither talents nor inclination for any such customs and manners?"——

"Why then really," returned Douglas, shrugging his shoulders, "you are only qualified to vegetate with the old friar in the forest. — However, make trial for one month of my system;—at the expiration of that term, if you do not persevere from choice, I give you up as incorrigible,—and you shall form your own."

Having nothing to oppose against this request, without appearing to be capricious and precise,—Lewis acceded to attend them every where for one month. He was not aware of the extent of his promise, —nor could he foresee the gulph that was preparing to open before him.

'Tis now time we should introduce to our readers, the noble Count Benito, and the Seignor Massini;—but we will pay them the compliment of appearing in a new chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

THE Count Benito was a Neapolitan by birth, and his ancestors had possessed both rank and riches. His father succeeded to an estate, that exhausted by the luxuries and extravagance of its former owners, left him but very little to value himself with on the score of riches. But pride and vanity concealed the deficiency of wealth, and the resource of deep play, in which he was an adept, enabled him to support his title with some little ostentation, but without any real dignity.

When he came to this impaired estate, he was a widower with one son and two daughters;—and when he discovered the real amount of his fortune, the two latter were thrust into convents, and the former was allowed to be his father's companion, and at a very early age initiated into the science of play.

But fortune does not always reward merit. The elder Count Benito very frequently lost both his money and his temper, to others who were not less knowing, and had more command over their passions than himself;—and as he never could be brought to acknowledge the possibility that any man could equal him in skill,—and until of late that a few new scientific gentlemen had started up, had been unaccustomed to lose or dread any competitor,—his disposition grew very irritable, and at length drove him to insult a fortunate opponent, in a way never

never to be forgiven by a Neapolitan without revenge.

In a few days from this affront being given he was found assassinated in the street. A mortal stab had deprived him of life,—and the perpetrator was never discovered.

The young Count found on an investigation into his affairs, that they were so involved, as to make it very convenient to him to leave Naples, where he was too well known; — and try on another theatre, to recover his reputation, and make his fortune.

He came to Florence, where by a natural assimilation of character, he soon formed an acquaintance with Seignor Massini, a young man of respectable connexions, but of dissolute manners, who had exhausted a small paternal fortune, and

and by the irregularities of his conduct, had disgusted his friends. These gentlemen quickly understood each other; and clubbed their little property, their talents, and ingenuity, to levy a tax upon the less knowing one's, who were to contribute to their support.

Soon after this partnership commenced, Monsieur De Preux came to Florence in the suite of a young English nobleman, who was but an indifferent proficient in the French language, and knew still less of Italian, indeed almost nothing. De Preux attended him as a kind of valet de place and interpreter. This young lord had no governor, had just come of age, and taken possession of a fine fortune. A long minority had placed him under the care of an avaricious old uncle, who had shamefully neglected his education, and paid still less attention to his morals and manners.

He

He had an aunt, and a sister, to whose care, most fortunately, she was committed. This lady saw that the illiberal parsimony of his uncle would be the entire ruin of her nephew, but her remonstrances availed nothing; he was kept at an indifferent grammar school, where superficial knowledge was substituted for real improvement, until his uncle thought fit to recal him, and on his death bed acknowledge, that he was nearly one-and-twenty. This uncle died, who was the last remaining trustee for the young orphan. The few months intervening before he became his own master, he passed with his sister. Her acquirements and talents made him blush for his own defects, and he resolved to travel; —as if going into foreign countries could remove the baneful consequence of a neglected education, and give energy to an uninformed mind.

He

He had no sooner been put in possession of his estates, than he eagerly pursued the plan he had formed, and with two servants, and no equipage, he left England and arrived in France; where he found it requisite to have a travelling valet, for his domestics were downright Englishmen. Monsieur De Preux was just then disengaged, and in the auberge where this nobleman alighted, of course he was recommended;—his person, manners, and little history, related by the master of the auberge, interested the feelings of a generous Englishman, and he was presently inducted in his place of an interpreter, occasional valet, and as a proper appendage to the suite of my Lord Anglois.

In this situation they arrived in Florence, where by the chapter of accidents, and keen look-out of Monsieur Massini, they formed a wonderful intimacy with him and the Count. The plausible manners,

ners, engaging air, and perfect knowledge of mankind, which they displayed to the best advantage, had its intended effect on my Lord D*****. Constitutional good humour, and ignorance of the world, made him an easy prey to artful men, who veiled the depravity of their hearts by the most superficial acquirements and persuasive agrèmens.

As we are not writing the history of Lord D*****, we shall only briefly add, that his agreeable friends in a few months plundered him of his money, and ruined his health.—The physicians advised a return to his native air, as a last resource against the ravages of a rapid decline, and to travel by easy journies through France.

His aunt and sister were then on the Continent, and appointed to meet him at Liege, if he would take his route through that city, where they were to join some particular

particular friends. He complied with their wishes, arrived there, and in three weeks after fell a sacrifice to the irregularities his constitution was unequal to cope with.—His clothes, watch, and two hundred pounds, were bequeathed to De Preux, who had artfully kept his influence unimpaired, and his integrity unimpeached.

It was very shortly after this event that he was recommended to Father Francis in an advantageous point of view, superior to a common valet. The predilection of Douglas was no less unexpected than desirable; and when Florence was the declared head quarters for some time, he wrote to Seignor Massini, who with his friend the Count were prepared to receive a second unsuspecting Englishman the moment he arrived.

And now having introduced the Italians to the knowledge of our readers, and the nature

nature of their acquaintance with De Preux, we shall just observe, that the poor humbly-born Lewis was a thorn in their path they were resolved to get rid of, as they hated his upright principles, and dreaded lest he should penetrate into their real characters. The letter of Father Francis to his brother, De Preux had artfully contrived to take away, when one day entrusted to search for some other paper in the travelling desk; and by that means prevented the developement of the characters, pretty well known in Florence, of his two associates.

Douglas was too indifferent for an introduction to an old priest, to give himself any concern at the disappearance of the paper, and Lewis simply concluded it was carelessly left behind them at the Convent. In proportion as their new acquaintance gained ground in the good opinion of Douglas, the influence of Lewis declined; the

the unobtrusive good qualities of the latter, and the integrity of his principles, were felt as reproachful and tiresome, and yet it was impossible to treat him ill, or designedly to affront him.

The two machinators saw plainly there were but three ways to get rid of him—either by private assassination, insupportable insults, that would rouze him to demand a separation from Douglas, or, by arts they were but too well versed in, to draw him imperceptibly from that rectitude of conduct, so very opposite to their own, as to engender both fear and hatred. This last plan was adopted, as it would afford them more exquisite gratification; for they were arrived at that height of depravity, to feel a fiend-like pleasure in the destruction of another, who presumed to act from the dictates of his conscience.

It has been observed that the travellers were accommodated in the house of a widow woman, who had a son and two daughters. The son was employed in a mercantile house, the youngest daughter was but eleven years of age, and of a delicate constitution; but the oldest, Caroline, was between fifteen and sixteen, tall, well-formed, a good complexion, and a pair of the most beautiful black eyes that imagination can form,—there was a seducive softness in her manners that irresistibly engaged the attention and demanded kindness.

Lewis had a susceptible heart, and a natural tenderness in his disposition that inclined him to behold every female with complacency, and treat her with respect. To the sex in general he had paid but little attention, until he saw Hermine, her loveliness of person and mind had first roused his dormant sensibility, and taught him the danger of indulging in an intercourse with

a fascinating object, whose supposed high birth and merits placed an insuperable barrier between them. But this first passion guarded his heart against other impressions. He had seen Fidelia but once, he allowed she was very beautiful, but he thought of her no more, otherwise than as the friend of Hermine and the sister of Douglas;—he had noticed a great number of pretty women, in the different provinces and towns they passed thro', but not one who engaged a second thought.

This, however, was not the case with Caroline. He had not been two days in the house before her attractive softness, and the glances that shot from her bright and piercing eyes, made a pleasing impression on his heart,—not such as Hermine had inspired, but a sort of gentle complacency stole over it, that inclined him to speak with tenderness in his voice, and impelled him to assist her in many little domestic concerns

The impetuous youth swore that he loved him heartily,—and that he was only ashamed of the trifle that he offered.—"But," said he, "I am an only son, and heir, after my uncle's death, to the title and estate of Lord Douglas;—and then, my friend, that hundred shall be made five."

This declared heirship was extremely pleasing to his dear friends, and the delicacy of Monsieur De Preux was at length obliged to submit to the great kindness of his benefactors.

The following morning when they met at breakfast, De Preux proposed taking their credentials to the brother of Father Francis. Lewis received the proposal with pleasure, — Douglas with indifference; he acceded however, and the travelling writing desk was opened to take out the letter.—After tumbling over every pa-

per in it, no such letter could be found;—and the name of the noble family this good priest resided with, having been but once mentioned, neither of them recollected it, and the priest's appellative of Father St. Pierre, was too common to hope for any direction to him.

What was become of the letter no one knew, and as it had been given in compliment to Douglas, Lewis concluded from his careless volatility, that it must have been left behind, some-where in his apartment. Though much vexed, the error was not irretrievable,—"I shall write to my dear and reverend friend, to day," said he, "and solicit another introduction, if the former is not already on its way after us."

"Very possibly it may," returned Douglas, "it was unpardonable carelessness to be sure;—but however it will only be a short delay, and chance may yet befriend us,—

concerns that were performed in his prefence. Unhappily, what proceeded solely from a polite kindness he thought due to her manners and situation, was very differently interpreted by the object of his attention, who, charmed by the very first view of his really handsome person, was still more enchanted by his behaviour to her on all occasions; and in a very few days, encouraged a violent affection to take possession of her heart, that betrayed itself in every look and action, Lewis alone being unconscious of the theft he had committed.

Douglas had, at first, been inclined to trifle with this lovely girl, but a lady he had seen at the opera, and since that been introduced to, by his good friends, had entirely drawn his attentions another way, from artless charms to the more captivating and irresistible attractions of artificial beauty. The passion of the innocent Caroline had been quickly noticed by the Count

Count and his coadjutor, and De Preux had been introduced to fan the flame, and promote an intrigue between the two unsuspecting victims. The month Douglas had exacted from Lewis to follow his lead in the gay world, at first seemed to disconcert their plan; but their deep art soon contrived to turn it to the advantage of their first scheme, in which it was necessary to make Douglas an assistant.

Three days did Lewis painfully adhere to his promise, and attend the party through the whole routine of dissipation and riot, of plays, operas, gambling societies, and even to the houses of some famous courtesans, where every allurement was employed to draw him into their snares.—His fortitude was severely tried, but he came off conqueror; yet his passions had been inflamed, and his, till then, uncorrupt mind, a little vitiated.

He

He felt his danger, detested the mode of life his young companion pursued with such avidity, and conceived it his duty to point out to him the irreparable ruin and disgrace he must draw on himself by following such a system of vice and irregularity. Douglas heard him with a cold air, and answered with a contemptuous smile, that "He was too young, and too little informed of the customs and manners of society, to take upon himself the character of a preceptor, and would very soon be an object of general ridicule, if he affected to be a moralist, *fresh imported from the Forest of Ardenne.*"

"I feel, indeed," said Lewis, with some spirit, "that I am out of my proper place here,—that I am entirely useless to you, and live idly and unprofitably to myself.—I am no ways entitled to the salary your good father was pleased to settle on me, when

when I can in no shape contribute to your pleasure or improvement."

"Why really," answered Douglas, "it was a queer business to suppose I could derive either from one so entirely ignorant of men and manners,—but the grand design, I suppose, was, that you were to preach morality to me, like your prototype, Father Francis.—All that I had no objection to, now and then, to give variety to conversation, and I intended to return your instruction tenfold, by teaching you a knowledge of the world,—but you seem to be incorrigibly stupid (perhaps *you call it being correct)*, you will not attend to *my* lessons, and your's are too uniformly dull to make any impression on me;—so, if you please, we will conclude our plan of mutual improvement, and each shall live agreeably to his own disposition,—for there can be neither regard or cordiality, where there is a perpetual restraint."

"My

"My dear Mr. Douglas," cried Lewis, with great emotion, taking his hand, "I flattered myself with the hope of obtaining your confidence and esteem.—Your uncommon understanding and talents, so very superior to mine, independent of worldly knowledge, gave me the promise of deriving the highest advantages from attending you;—and you have it largely in your power, I am convinced, to realize those hopes and this promise."

"But you won't let me do it," cried Douglas, interrupting him. "I would lead the way for you to partake in every pleasure and advantage of this delightful city;—but you hang back, and like a misanthrope, fly the society of men, and women too."——

"What kind of men, what order of women, is it from whom I turn? Such as

will debase my mind, and likewise ruin my constitution."

"Debase you," cried Douglas, haughtily, "my friends, men of rank and fashion, *debase you*, sir?"

"Yes," answered Lewis, firmly, "tho' humbly born,—without parents, friends, or fortune,—an insulated being, cast on the world to carve out my future support,—I have a *mind*, sir, as *noble*, and more *uncorrupt* than those gentlemen you speak of. I respect their rank in society, but I do not esteem their manners; nor will I catch the infection, by associating with persons, so much *superior to me*, as they are above having any regard to decorum or decency."

"You are scurrilous, as well as impertinent," retorted Douglas, with great acrimony.

"I

"I am sorry you should think so;—I mean not to be either, nor would I offend you designedly; yet I must again repeat, at your age——"

"Oh, yes, at my age I suppose you think I should be at school, under the rod of a master.—But to end a conversation sufficiently disagreeable, I must tell you, Berthier, that I expect my friends to be treated with respect, and mentioned with the deference due to their rank and fortune.—And as *free-will* on all occasions is with me the order of the day, I release you from the promise I exacted;—pass *your* time as *you* like, and allow me to be uncontrouled master of mine."

"You will have no objection, I presume," said Lewis, "if I write to Mr. Douglas, that I beg to decline his salary in one month, from this day, which I shall employ in seeking out a situation more

adapted to my birth and talents;—and request Father Francis, through the medium of his brother, to assist me in that search."

"You will do as you please," answered Douglas, "but what reasons will you give to my father for resigning your place and salary?"

"That I find my abilities and ignorance of the world totally disqualify me from pursuing a line of life not agreeable to my inclinations, which are as humble as my fortunes.—You, sir, may say what you please, for I shall not assign any other cause."

"Very well," returned Douglas, "but if our inclinations do not coincide, and each chooses to decide for himself,—let us have no altercations, for I detest ill-humour."

"I

"I am sure," replied Lewis, "it is both my wish and intention to contribute to your ease and good-humour;—and I am so very sensible that ill-nature and illiberal reflections are not natural to you, that though I have felt the severity of your sarcasms, I have forborn to retort or resent them."

"Well, well, peace is restored," said Douglas,—"you have vexed me, but I did not intend to hurt your feelings."

"That is enough," returned Lewis.—"Oh, that with such a disposition, and with such abilities."—"No Oh's nor Ah's," cried Douglas, "you may be, and are, I believe, a good fellow; but you have been spoiled by that old friar, and are only qualified to be confessor to some beautiful lady, whose venial sins require some ghostly master."

Laughing aloud at his own conceit, he left the room, and reported to the trio, who were in the saloon, the intention of Lewis to withdraw from his situation.—This was a most agreeable piece of information, but it stimulated them to proceed more diligently in their plot, that his secession from them might not be entirely with self-exultation.

Lewis settled to his apartment to write, as he had proposed doing. He was a good deal vexed, but more concerned for Douglas, than at that moment for himself. He foresaw the complete ruin of that headstrong youth, and could scarcely answer it to his conscience, not to acquaint his father of his danger.—But no particular confidence or injunction being laid upon him, and knowing but little of the father's character, and that little not highly to his advantage, particularly when he considered that it must be a very careless parent, or a culpable one, who

who could have permitted a youth at his age, to have run into such excesses, he contented himself with a short and simple apology, for resigning a situation he was not competent to retain.

But to Father Francis he was more unreserved;—he was bound to account for his conduct to him, and though he spake with tenderness and delicacy of Mr. Douglas, he did not feel himself obliged to be so very cautious in describing the licentious manners of his two associates.—But more than all, he condemned De Preux, whose character had opened upon him every day, and whom he beheld as a mere flatterer, deceitful, dissipated, and unprincipled,—and every way unworthy of the distinction Mr. Douglas had raised him to.

He was entirely unacquainted with the annuity Douglas had settled on him by the

artifices of his companions;—and that from the quarterly allowance just received from his father, and paid by the banker, he had given De Preux fifty pounds, besides losing several small sums to him at play;—and had already given notes for nearly a thousand pounds to his good friends, for money lost to them, and the means of making presents to his favourite lady.

What a culpable want of judgment and discretion in Mr. Douglas, to trust a volatile youth abroad, so slenderly provided with persons competent to direct, and with *none* who had a right to assume any authority over him! Poor man, how much had he to answer for in the arrangements of his family, for that imbecility of mind,—that weak unsteady line of conduct he had pursued to procure temporary peace, at the expence of every duty;—and laying up for himself years of unavailing sorrow and regret.

Lewis

Lewis had written his letters, and was leaving the room to have them sent to the post, when at the door he met Caroline. The tears were running down her cheeks. A sudden impulse of tenderness made him seize her hand,—"Ah, what is the matter, why do you weep?"

The mother of Caroline was a French woman, and had accustomed her daughters to speak the language. Otherwise, as Lewis spake but little Italian, their subsequent dangerous conversations might have saved them both from much repentance hereafter.

"Why do you weep?" repeated Lewis, in a tender voice.

"Oh, the Count, the Count!" exclaimed she.—"The Count! how, what, what has the Count to do with you?"—"Oh, nothing," answered she, still

weeping, "he is nothing to me;—but you, he told me, *you* was going to leave Florence."——

Poor Lewis! it was the first time in his life a sentiment so tender, a regret so affectionate, had ever met his eyes, or reached his ears;—it penetrated to his heart.—"What, then it is for me you weep, dear Caroline;—will you be sorry when I leave you?"—"Sorry! Oh, I shall be miserable;—but let me pass, I know not what I am saying."

Lewis however did not let her pass;—he took her hand and led her into the garden, towards a grotto surrounded with flowering shrubs. He seated her, still weeping, and placed himself by her;—for a few moments both were silent, his mind was a perfect chaos, his sensations new and undefinable.—At length he gathered resolution to say,—"It is most likely that I shall leave

leave Florence soon, but not absolutely certain."—"No," cried she, withdrawing the handkerchief that covered her face,—"not quite certain that you shall go,—then pray do not."

"Dear Caroline," rejoined he, "I am not master of my own destiny—to go or stay does not depend upon my choice."

"Ah!" said she, "Monsieur De Preux said you might stop if you would, and that he was sure, *quite sure*, if I—if I—" "What," cried Lewis, "what, if you—speak out." "Why he said, were I to ask you, he believed you would be prevailed upon. But I have no right to ask you; though I thought I should have swooned when I heard you was going—but I can't help it you know, *if you must leave us*."

Oh, children of simplicity, how dangerous are you to an unsophisticated heart!

—Lewis

—Lewis, who had so lately been despised, insulted, and neglected, who had never yet met with a female susceptible and tender, felt the most lively emotions of gratitude to the affectionate Caroline. They entered into a long conversation; he found she was the child of nature, innocent and guileless. Her mother, left to struggle with difficulties, had not the means to cultivate an understanding very capable of improvement; she had been growing up in obscurity, confined to the house, and solely employed in waiting on the guests.

She had never seen an object that touched her heart till she beheld Lewis; and ignorant of her danger, cherished the tender inclination till it had become fatal to her repose,—till she adored him, and every wish of her gentle heart was centred in Lewis. He alone was unacquainted with his conquest, though he admired her person, and was charmed by the softness

of

of her manners; but never once suspected that every kind attention he paid to her was fanning a flame already too strong for her resolution to stifle.

After the first lively emotions on the side of Lewis began to subside, he frankly told his simple history, with the greatest exactness, only omitting what particularly concerned Hermine. But the relation had recalled her to his mind's eye in all her superior loveliness, dignity, and refined understanding—a recollection not favourable to poor Caroline at the time; and at the conclusion of his story threw an air of sadness over his countenance, and a coldness in his manner very different from his first address to her.

"You are not then an English my lord, nor a French nobleman—you are humble like me. Oh, you may obtain many situations in Florence;—pray do not go back to that

that dismal forest, to that old priest, who may die and leave you forlorn there."

"I know not," answered Lewis, "what is to become of me. I shall certainly follow my good father's advice, for having lost all the natural guides that God gave me, I look upon him as my father, benefactor, and friend. But do not weep again, my dear Caroline, — I feel your kindness most sensibly, and assure you I shall experience very great regret to leave you, for my heart I hope is formed for friendship, and grateful for your regard."

Little more passed at this interview.— They returned to the house, Caroline pleased with the tenderness he had expressed for her; and Lewis no less gratified that there was one object in the world desirous of attaching him to herself. "She certainly loves me," said he, "and 'tis as certain, by comparing her feelings with Hermine's

Hermine's when I took leave of her, that the latter has nothing more than a friendship for me—indeed I dare not wish for more. Well then, I will attach myself to the lovely, gentle Caroline, and she will teach me to overcome a hopeless passion, and render me more worthy of Hermine's friendship, when I have for ever conquered my too presumptuous wishes."

He now recollected his letters, and returned to the room where he had stopped with them—they were not to be found, he enquired throughout the house, Mr. Douglas's valet appeared, "he had taken them to the post." "By whose order?" asked Lewis. "My master's, Sir; he came here to seal a letter of his own, and saw two other's laying on the table,—"Take these with you, Renaud," he said, "they are Mr. Berthier's I know, and intended for the post." "Oh, very well," said Lewis, "I am obliged to Mr. Douglas."

Several

Several days passed on after this, in every one of which Lewis and Caroline were sure to pass an hour or two in conversation.—Her tenderness grew infectious; and the revolution in his sentiments and heart were not long unobserved by De Preux, whose penetration nothing could elude. "The philosopher is in love," said he, "we have succeeded to a miracle, we have warmed the flinty bosom, and shall see the struggle between passion and morality very soon—depend upon it the girl will conquer."—"Then *she* will be the victim to your scheme," said Douglas: "What do you propose as the consequence to him?"

"Oh, you shall see in good time. He begins to fret exceedingly that no letters come from the old friar—I intercepted one this morning."

"With a fresh letter of introduction to the brother, I suppose," said Douglas.—Adding,

Adding, "I have no wish to profit by such an introduction, for my dear Eleanora has proposed an excursion to Bologna for a month; and if you can tell me where to raise the money, without borrowing any more from the Count, I intend going."

"We can all make a party, and money shan't be wanting. As to the letter I shall fling it into the fire,—and by leaving him behind, we shall throw him directly into the arms of Caroline,—she's a delicious girl, I shall like her myself by and by." "Upon my soul," returned Douglas, "I don't half like these plots upon Lewis, let him set off quietly and go to the devil his own way,—why should you push him forward before his time?—After all, he is an honest good lad, and tho' I hate his puritanicals and shall be glad to get rid of him, some how I don't like doing him any real injury."

"Injury!"

"Injury!—Do you call throwing him into the arms of a fine girl doing him an injury?—I can tell you one thing, sir, if he does not get entangled with this girl, unless I am strangely out in my calculations, he may prove a thorn in *your path*, you will not find it easy to throw aside." "I do not understand you!" "Then I must speak more plainly,—I should be very sorry to see a favourite sultana of mine cast such glances at another as your Eleanora does at him, when he has been prevailed upon to accompany you."

"Death and confusion!" exclaimed Douglas, "you are not serious sure?" "Indeed but I am,—and she has asked me a hundred questions about him, and extolled his face and figure to the skies, when you were not present."

"O, throw him into the arms of the devil then, if you will, and get rid of him. S'death,

S'death, if I thought my Eleanora bestowed one tender glance on him, I would have him thrown neck and heels into the Arno! —But let us hasten then from Florence." "Very well, I shall see about the needful preparations."

Thus the artful De Preux, by a dexterous attack upon the ruling passion of Douglas, changed the tide of justice, and upset the feelings of generosity which lingered in the bosom of this volatile young man, in behalf of Lewis. It must, however, be acknowledged, De Preux' observations were not quite erroneous.—From the first night of their appearance at the opera, this lady Eleanora had been prodigiously struck with the manly and handsome person of Lewis;—but when informed that he was low-born,—without fortune,—and a dependant upon the young Englishman, avarice quickly superseded inclination, and my Lord Anglois was received into her suite,

suite, with a declared preference over all his rivals.

For some time Lewis had declined accompanying Douglas in his visits to her, when she received her morning attendants, and the warm admiration of Douglas, who was a fine youth, tho' of a boyish appearance,—the presents he made her, and the absence of his companion, altogether secured to him as much attachment as a woman of her stamp was capable of feeling.

Unconscious of the consequence, he had one day prevailed on Lewis to call in with him, when she was making her toilet.—No less delighted than surprised, she threw out every allurement to captivate the insensible youth; but tho' he admired her beauty he felt a contempt for her character that effectually secured him from her snares, and she was greatly enraged on perceiving all her arts were fruitless, and her charms

charms lost, on this "cold, marble-hearted *peasant*," as she called him in her fit of resentful passion.—But the more indifferent he were, the greater would be her triumph to subdue his frozen heart, and it was her scheme, of which Douglas was the dupe, to prevail upon Lewis, for one month, to follow the lead of his friend, and enter more freely into their parties. By this plan she saw him several times, grew daily more attached, and had actually asked De Preux a number of questions, which he answered not very favourably towards a youth he both hated and feared.

When she proposed a journey to Boulogna, it was her design to include Lewis, but fearful to name him, she seemed to take it as a matter of course that he was to be included in the party, and consequently would become domesticated with them. The little fracas that happened between Douglas and him, with the observations thrown

thrown out by De Preux, prevented the former from intimating to Lewis the least tittle of the intended tour;—and when De Preux left him, he repaired, not in the best of all possible humours, to the apartments of Eleanora.

Unfortunately a great revolution had taken place in a few hours there,—an Austrian nobleman, who had been some time in Florence, having parted with a lady who came there under his protection, had been looking out for a fair one worthy to succeed her;—accident had thrown him in the way of Eleanora, and he was much captivated by her beauty. Early that morning he had caused proposals to be made to her of a handsome settlement, with magnificent presents, if she would accompany him in his tour through France to England, where he purposed residing some time. The attentions of this nobleman had not been unmarked by the lady, and the

the proposal admitted not of the slightest hesitation;—the attachment and constancy of such women as have forfeited their pretensions to virtue and reputation, are held by too brittle a tie to resist the gratification of avarice and vanity,—the most wealthy bidder is sure to be the successful one.

The scanty allowance of Douglas, tho' he had involved himself deeply to answer her demands, were very inadequate to her wants and boundless extravagance,—tho' she had not piqued herself upon her constancy to him, or declined private visits when he was elsewhere disposed of.—But this present offer gratified every passion of her heart, and she made no scruple to accept of it, appointing the following day for signing of settlements, and assigning over her own person as an equivalent.

How vitiated, depraved, and contemptible is the mind of man when once he gives himself

himself up to dissipation, and becomes the slave of a vicious woman!—A woman, who boldly stepping over every boundary of virtue, every pretension to reputation, can, with undaunted effrontery insult modesty and female decorum, by appearing publicly infamous!—Such was this beautiful Italian. The number of her lovers was her boast, and the only merit she pretended to, was "that she was no hypocrite, and despised the censure of the world too much, to affect even the appearance of virtues she had long since thrown aside."

Soon after she had dismissed the Count's messenger, and was got to the pinnacle of vanity and self-gratification, sooner than the hour he generally visited, came in Douglas, with a clouded brow and discontented air. She received him haughtily, but it was unobserved,—he threw himself on a sofa, but raising his eyes to her face, which, from the satisfaction of her mind, looked

looked uncommonly animated and beautiful, his discontent gave way to love and admiration.—"My dearest Eleanora! when shall we set off for Bologna? I am impatient to be gone, De Preux will settle every thing necessary.—Say, shall we go to-morrow or next day?—My dearest angel, name your time."

With an air of the most perfect nonchalence, she coldly withdrew her hand.—"I have, within these two hours, determined on a different plan. I am sensible, Mr. Douglas, your fortune is not adequate to these sort of excursions, and we have played the fool together long enough;—in short our acquaintance ends this day.—I have accepted the protection of a nobleman, whose handsome settlement and immense fortune is proportioned to my expectations. I wish you success in a more agreeable engagement."

She rose, left the room, kissing her hand with a smiling countenance;—and presently a servant entered,—"My lady is engaged, sir, and requests you will not wait."

It has been observed that Douglas had a great deal of pride and passion in his composition which he inherited from his mother; he was also passionately fond of this abandoned woman.

Astonished, petrified, and struck dumb, by the beginning of her address, he had suffered her to proceed, and to quit the room, without the power of articulating a sentence;—but the message delivered by the servant with an air of insolence, rouzed every feeling to a degree of madness.—He started up, kicked the man out of the room, and with a small cane, in the twinkling of an eye, demolished a cabinet of most curious china, and broke three superb glasses into fritters.

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The screams of the man, and the noise made by the glittering fragments, brought up a number of domestics, who seemed inclined to lay hold of him; but uttering the most violent execrations and curses on the false Eleanora, brandishing his cane in a threatening attitude over their heads, they all shrank from his frantic rage, and suffered him to leave the house without a single word, or effort to detain him.

In a state of distraction he flew home, rushed by the servant who admitted him into his apartment, where he found his two Italians and De Preux in deep conversation, expecting nothing less than his return.—They started on seeing his disordered air, and his rage, no longer restrained within bounds on seeing those persons who had introduced him to the faithless Eleanora.

"What amends," asked he fiercely, "can you make me for the entire destruc-

tion of my happiness;—and overwhelming me with debts to gratify a base, ungrateful vile woman? That avaricious wretch! but by Heavens I'll be revenged;—I will set fire to her house, destroy her, and murder you and myself.—Oh, that I had her here, to tear her false, destructive, beautiful form to pieces."

This last idea overcame him;—he sank on the floor, suffocated by passion, and writhed in strong convulsions. Surprise and amazement had seized upon the plotting trio, who were totally unacquainted with Eleanora's defection, and in no shape could account for this paroxysm of rage and despair.

The house was presently alarmed, and Lewis summoned from a very interesting teté-a-teté with Caroline, to assist his unhappy companion. He was conveyed to bed, and a medical gentleman sent for, who gave

gave it as his opinion that a great oppression on his heart rendered his case extremely dangerous;—but as this oppression must very soon terminate one way or the other, it would be useless to alarm the gentleman's friends at present, until the crisis was over.

Lewis was shocked and deeply afflicted; no one could account for this sudden disorder, and those who had their suspicions wisely concealed them. Under a pretence of procuring further advice, the Count stole off to the house of Eleanora. He was denied admission; for intoxicated by her sudden elevation, and preparing to exhibit herself with wonderful eclat and brilliancy, she had determined to drop her acquaintance with those sharpers, who were no longer necessary to carry on her schemes.

So little dependence is there on the friendship of wicked associates, when in-

terest ceases to bind them together in the links of vice. She had foreseen the rage of her discarded lover, who might employ one of his companions to call on her, and she had given her servants their lessons.

When the Count asked for his lady, the man replied, "She had been terrified out of the house by the sudden madness of the English my Lord, who had violently abused their lady,—broke all the noble glasses, beat her cabinet of beautiful china to pieces,—and driven her to fly to the house of a friend for two or three days. And had left word that if the Count valued his life, he should instantly drop acquaintance with that mad English boy."

This strange relation made the affair more inexplicable to the Count, and compelled him to return with this unsatisfactory account to his associates. The convulsions had left Douglas, but a brain fever

was

was the consequence, in which he raved incessantly on the false, lovely, perfidious, dear, divine Eleanora; until nature exhausted, he lay several days speechless, and borne down by the violence of his disorder.

During this period, the triumphant cause of his misery was seen publicly under the protection of the Austrian Count; blazing in jewels, and all the paraphernalia of dress and equipage. The Italians were at no loss now for the spring that had caused all this tumult and distress, and not a little exasperated against Eleanora who disdained to notice them, or even recognize their persons, when they made their humble bows to her elevated station.

But she was above their reproach, resentment, or revenge, and very soon left Florence, to shine in other countries *gloriously infamous.*

When the violence of the fever abated, and reason once more resumed her powers, Douglas feebly enquired for Lewis; he was sitting behind the curtain heavily afflicted. On hearing his name pronounced, he darted forward and pressed the hand that lay on the clothes. "Here, my dear Douglas, is your Lewis, Heaven be praised that you can once more call on him!"

"I feel very weak and ill," returned Douglas, "don't leave me." "Leave you," exclaimed Lewis, "I have never quitted your bed-side, for ten minutes, but once, since you were taken ill; would to Heaven I had never, never left you. Oh, if that hour could be recalled! But I rave—my dear Douglas, my prayers are not utterly rejected; you live, what a consolation is that!" Tears dropped from his eyes, and he covered his face.

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The entrance of the physician caused him to struggle for composure, and the almost sudden change in the disorder of his patient, led the doctor to conclude those tears were the ebullitions of joy; having witnessed the uncommon attention, and deep concern this young man had shewn through the whole progress, of his friend's illness. He therefore congratulated Lewis on the favourable change, and bid him take care of his own health, which he feared must suffer from his constant watching, and very close confinement.

"Watching!" said Douglas. "Yes," returned the physician, "in spite of all remonstrances, this young man has never quitted your bed for eight days and nights." "Oh yes," exclaimed Lewis, "one day, one fatal day!" The physician looked surprised at this sally, but rejoined, "he has never been in any bed, or left you an hour, I believe, and your recovery must in

a great measure be attributed to his uncommon attention and attachment."

Douglas attempted to speak, but his emotions were too much for his weak frame to express. The doctor requested he would be silent, adding, "Under God, I hope we shall soon bring you about again; but be very composed, use no exertion, nor force yourself to speak on any account."

Having ordered what was necessary, as he quitted the apartment, he started and stopped, looking earnestly on Lewis, "I fear you are ill?" "No," replied Lewis, "I have no bodily complaints." "Then I entreat you to go to your chamber, and get some rest; see, your friend has fallen into a dose, you may safely leave him with the nurse. Come, I insist upon your going to bed, and will see you to your room."

Without

Without making any reply, Lewis rose and went quietly to his apartment, when calling a servant to assist him, the good man left him for the present, resolving to call again in a few hours, as he really apprehended he would be seriously ill.

Poor Lewis was indeed ill—he endured the most excruciating of all pains, the least supportable of all disorders—his were mental, the horrors of *remorse*; of all human ill the most bitter, the most wounding to a feeling heart. We must now go a little back, to trace the cause that had overwhelmed our unhappy peasant with a disturbance of mind no words can describe.

It has been mentioned that the contagious tenderness of the artless Caroline had caused sensations in the breast of Lewis, that had produced an appearance of a reciprosity of feeling; but in fact, tho' he admired and loved this unfortunate girl,

it

it was more the delusion of his senses, the effusions of gratitude and compassion than a heart-felt affection, founded on a real attachment and esteem. But free from all duplicity, not once dreaming of the danger that awaited him, he had repeated his own story to Caroline, to shew her what a poor insulated being he was, under the idea that it would check that affectionate preference for him she could not disguise, as it was most probable he should soon leave his situation, and quit the country.

She heard him with sorrow, but she did not despair, for the base, artful De Preux took every opportunity to assure her, that Lewis doated upon her, but knowing his inability to provide for her, was almost breaking his heart, between affection and honour. "Now," said the insidious fellow, "he is too scrupulous; with his abilities he might gain a very decent competence

tence in this city, and be a protector to you and your mother. Mr. Douglas would recommend him to his countrymen who come here—the Count and Seignor Massini would do their utmost to serve him. I see you love him, my sweet girl, and he is no less attached to you, 'tis his pride that makes him hang back, because he can't provide for you, this he has confessed to me; but take no notice of what I tell you—redouble your tenderness, sooth him into love, and he will be off his guard, and in an hour of fondness offer you his hand; then he *cannot retreat*, and all shall be settled to your mutual satisfaction."

The credulous, too tender girl, believed implicitly every word this unworthy man uttered; and the very day that Douglas returned home half mad from the house of Eleanora, they were sitting in a little arbour at the bottom of the garden—Caroline imploring him to remain in Florence, avowing

avowing she should be miserable if he went away, and by the most artless, innocently intended fondness, caused no small emotions in the bosom of Lewis, whose gratitude, and naturally affectionate heart, made him tenderly caress and thank her for her solicitude and kindness. In this seducive moment he was called away to Douglas, without even apprehending his danger; and the dreadful disorder that seized on that youth, entirely engrossed every thought, and every moment of his time.

He had not, but casually, seen Caroline for four or five days, when the delirium having ceased, tho' his recovery was extremely doubtful, Lewis, one unfortunate evening, was prevailed upon, by De Preux, who took his station by the side of the bed, to leave poor Douglas, and take a turn in the garden. It was very reluctantly that he yielded to the pressing entreaties of De Preux.

Preux, who urged the absolute necessity of air, to keep up his strength and spirits during his painful attendance on his friend, which was not yet likely to terminate.—Very unwillingly he left the room and strolled towards the arbour which was surrounded by beautiful shrubs, and separated from the garden by a small murmuring rivulet, over which was thrown a neat chinese bridge of one arch.

To this soul-soothing spot he directed his steps, and entering the arbour, beheld in one corner, leaning her head against a net-work of woodbines, the lovely Caroline, bitterly weeping. His heart softened,—his spirits depressed,—and his feelings in unison with her's, sad and tender,—he hastened to console her; and with looks and words of the kindest import, enquired the cause of her distress. "'Tis you," said she, weeping more violently, "you have forgot me, you never even spoke when we

we have met, but fly from me to the sick chamber.—Ah! you know not what *I suffer*, and how often I have wished to be ill, if you would so attend me as you do Mr. Douglas;—yes, I could die, if sure that you would sit by me and close my eyes, for I enjoy no comfort in this life.—My mother is harsh and severe,—I am fatigued every night when I go to bed, and rise sorrowful in the morning.—My brother has enough for his own support, but can do nothing for me but give me good advice. I am sure I know no ill, or wish harm to any human being; but I am very miserable myself, and you, Mr. Lewis, make me still more unhappy, I am sure you are offended with me." Again she wept aloud. — Dangerous moments! — Lewis, distressed and agitated, clasped her to his bosom, and besought her to take comfort, that he was not, he could not be displeased *with her*;—on the contrary,

that

that he was grateful for her kindness, and felt the tenderest regard for her.

The love-sick transported girl forgot herself, and every thing respectable, in that moment of joy; a delirium stole over her senses, in the hope he was now going to offer her his hand; and in consequence of the pernicious advice of De Preux, and indulging the delusive wishes of her heart, without one vicious thought, without any premeditated guilt on either side, the poor unhappy Caroline fell a victim to her too great sensibility, her too sanguine hopes, that plunged her into shame and bitter repentance,—and brought on Lewis eternal remorse and unspeakable sorrow. No language can describe the feelings of two unfortunates, who gave themselves up to anguish and despair.—Caroline was the child of nature,—young, innocent, artless, and uneducated,—she loved virtue, but she had not been taught discretion,—and the neglect

neglect of her mother, the susceptibility of her heart, the arts of De Preux, the time, place, and circumstances, all conspired to render poor Caroline miserable and undone.

They had not repalled their scattered senses,—Caroline was bathed in tears, her handkerchief thrown over her face, Lewis standing holding one of her struggling hands, himself the image of despair, when De Preux and her brother Frosini stood before them.—The latter seized the arm of Lewis, "You have ruined my sister, villain!—this instant promise to repair her shame, to marry her, or she shall enter a convent for life, and *your life* shall be the sacrifice."

At these words Caroline threw herself at his feet, "Spare your reproaches and threats, I alone am to blame; and a convent is all I wish for since now I am unworthy of his hand—since I am a vile, bad creature,

creature, he cannot love me, and to be removed from the world is all I desire."

The young man, frantic with passion, uttered the vilest abuse against her—the severest menaces against Lewis. Caroline fainted; and while De Preux, with the malice and pleasure of a fiend, ran to procure help, Lewis, supporting the unhappy girl, said,—"Not out of consideration for myself, or dread of your revenge, but in tender regard to this dear girl, I pledge myself to marry her; with my whole heart and soul I will endeavour to restore *her peace*, and make her my wife, if she will accept of me as a husband."

This assurance tended a little to calm the rage of the brother, though he still bitterly reproached him. When De Preux came back with two women, the unfortunate Caroline, scarcely returned to her senses, was conveyed into the house; Lewis kissed

kissed her hand, "Take comfort," he whispered, "I am, I will be your husband." This assurance her brother Frosini drew him to repeat before De Preux, and he solemnly protested, when Douglas was pronounced out of danger, the marriage should take place. The following morning Caroline was removed from the house, until the ceremony could be performed.

The truly wretched Lewis returned to the bedside of his friend, whom he bitterly repented having left; and on a retrospect of the two last hours, wished he had been annihilated, or never been born. "I have undone a truly innocent tender girl, I feel that I am a guilty, despicable wretch; I have promised to marry her, *I will marry her*, and yet, I do not love her as I ought —I cannot behold her as dear to my heart, as my preferable choice; and yet, honour, compassion, and justice, demand that I should make her my wife, and restore her peace.

peace. What a weak, unworthy wretch am I become!" cried he, in an agony, "already plunged into vice and self-reproach.—Oh, Father Francis, why would you throw me on the world!—how little did you know me when you trusted to my discretion and integrity.—I have forfeited both, and to recover myself, must be lost to every future hope of justifying your partiality, your hope of my success in life.—How, indeed, am I to live at all, how support a wife?—Distraction will seize my brain, I fear—terrible thought!—Oh, how welcome were death — but, then poor Caroline!"

Hermine rose to his view, her last words, "the line of rectitude which seemed to be the ruling feature in his character." — "How have I disgraced her judgment, and forfeited her good opinion!—She will enquire, she will hear I have imprudently married, stopped short from a possibility of every

every advancement in life—she must not, shall not know the circumstances that impel me to marry—and I shall pass with her as a giddy, imprudent young man, unworthy of her regard or future notice!—And all this misery is the work of one fatal hour, the consequence of my folly and vanity, when I ought to have avoided the unhappy girl, and been decided in my conduct."

In these, and a thousand of such like painful self-upbraidings, did Lewis pass the cheerless hours by the bedside of Douglas, till, sorrow, regret, and fatigue had worn him to a shadow; a slow fever undermined his constitution, and the physician was well justified in supposing him to be very ill. The first moment of comfort, was when Douglas spake; and the little expected change in him gave a temporary relief to the distress of his mind, and induced

duced him to obey the physician, and retire to bed.

Nature, exhausted by what he had endured both in mind and body, soon sunk into repose, and he enjoyed six hours of refreshing sleep, which astonishingly relieved him from the stupor that had alarmed the doctor. But the invigorating powers of sleep, though it refreshed his body, could not remove the anguish of his mind—he remembered but too acutely, that such things had been, and that such things must be; and if the convalescence of Mr. Douglas was pronounced, he should be called upon for the performance of his engagement. With an oppressed heart, and dragging feet, he returned to the chamber of the invalid, on whom rest had had the same beneficial effects to a superior degree, for he could speak articulately, and move his hands.

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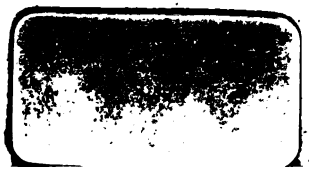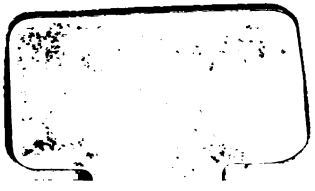
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